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Why waste your time on Facebook?: A temporal analysis of first-year undergraduate students and transition in UK Higher Education.

A Dissertation Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of PhD in Education

Eve Stirling

School of Education

The University of Sheffield



January 2014.

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xxx



FRANTISEK KUPKA – Zeitmessung, c. 1934. Albertina, Vienna.

The Measurement of Time

Abstract

In this thesis I document a study of first-year undergraduate students' uses of Facebook to negotiate their transition into their first year at a UK university. I did this through a mixed method two-phase approach of large-scale questionnaires and a longitudinal connective ethnography, which took place across Facebook and the university campus. The analysis was undertaken using a temporal framework. I explore literature from three differing research areas; the corpus of literature on student experience at university; literature on social media and technology use by Higher Education (HE) students, and literature on time and space in HE. The focus of my research was to explore the realities of social media use by undergraduates, specifically their use of Facebook in the first-year transition to university. The findings are presented as narratives of six Facebook Friends presented across the academic year. These narratives illustrate themes, which emerged from the data and include "making friends in the digital" to "disconnection (I don't want to be here anymore)". The multi-sited approach allowed for observation both on Facebook and face-to-face, so as to go beyond the online/offline dichotomy to explore the complex relationship of the embedded and ubiquitous nature of Facebook in my participants' lives.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



Another red notification symbol pops up at the top of my screen, I make a note in my research journal. I take a break from the research article I'm reading to view the interaction, who has got in contact?

There has been an intrinsic link between the social network site Facebook and young undergraduate students since the website's inception by students' studying at Harvard University in 2003. Joining the site was described by boyd (2008a) as a "rite of passage" (p.102) for those starting college. This thesis presents empirical research, which was undertaken in 2010 and explores this link between Facebook and the use of it by undergraduate students studying in Higher Education at one UK university. Social network sites are among the most popular everyday life activity destinations on the web (comScore, 2009; Dougherty, 2010), and Facebook is the most popular of these sites (other examples are Twitter, LinkedIn, Tumblr) with currently 1.19 billion monthly active users worldwide (Protalinski, 2013), (500 million at the time of study). At the start of this study in 2009, academic research into Facebook use was nascent but over the last four years it has become a burgeoning area (see Wilson, 2012, for a review of social science Facebook research). Research on Higher Education (HE) and Facebook (see Mazer et al., 2009; Madge et al, 2009; Selwyn, 2009) is still fairly new and this study adds to this body of the research, contributing to the less-researched area of the micro level examination of individual student usage.

Higher Education in England is facing one of the most radical changes ever seen. Higginbottom (2009) proposes that HE is driven by "forces such as globalization, demographics, technology, increasingly demanding student expectations and a new world in which high levels of knowledge and technology amongst workers are required for an increasingly competitive economy" (p.1). This is also backed up by the government report *Higher Ambitions* (BIS, 2009). Research into student experience in the changing university environment is, I believe, very pertinent. This is further endorsed by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), which, as Yorke and Longden

(2008) suggest, places strong emphasis on the student experience at university and the fact that this area has been especially under-researched in the UK. I aim for this body of research to add to both corpora of literature.

Positionality

My interest in studying undergraduate students and Facebook stems from my previous experience as a college and university lecturer. I have worked in Further and Higher Education (FE & HE) for over ten years and I have always found listening to students speak about their experiences extremely helpful when planning curriculum and responding to the wider societal changes taking place. This study is grounded in my previous research experience of my Masters research study, looking at undergraduates' use and non-use of Facebook for academic purposes. This study focused on learning and teaching use of Facebook in HE, inclusive of lecturer involvement.

Design thinking influences my research approach. My background previous to becoming an educational researcher was in product and interior design practice and lecturing. I have been tacitly influenced by the transdisciplinary approach, which is important in design thinking and design research (Cross, 2011, Trowler, 2012). Cross (2011, p.8) suggests the role of a designer is:

to interpret the creative brief as a starting point for a journey of exploration; the designer sets off to explore, to discover something new, rather than to reach somewhere already known, or to return with yet another example of the already familiar.

In doing so, designers research and draw on a range of expertise in this pursuit of discovery and in a similar manner I have been exploring undergraduate Facebook use. I discuss this in more detail in the methodology section but I wanted to draw attention to the influence of this on my stance as a researcher, as it has meant that my approach to this study is not what one could describe as traditionally grounded in one subject discipline.

What could be seen as an eclectic approach to the positioning of the study in a broad literature base is in fact influenced by my experience of a “user-centred” (Shove et al, 2007; Buurman, 1997) mentality to designing products and interiors. To be user-centred is to focus on the user and researching what they do in everyday life. This is in opposition to searching for the solution to a given problem through a design brief. I find similarities in this approach to anthropological ethnographic thinking and will detail this

approach in the methodology section. The participants in my study are not constrained by subject boundaries and I have tried not to be because I believe to fully engage in a deep understanding of my participants, I should be open to a range of ideas and theories. In taking a user-centred approach, I started the research process with the participants. I have subsequently applied a range of theoretical frameworks to my approach and findings and these will be detailed in the following thesis.

Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to explore undergraduates' use of Facebook in the first year of university. How is Facebook significant to the experience of first-year students?

I used the following questions to frame my research:

1. What role does Facebook play in the lives of transitioning students?
2. Can we learn anything new about transition from looking at students' Facebook profiles?
3. Can we learn anything new about students' experiences in HE from considering the role of time in students' lives?
4. How useful is time as an analytical tool when researching Facebook?
5. What are the possibilities and limitations of Facebook as a research site and research tool?

Gale & Parker (2012) call for research on HE students and transition to be "foregrounded in the students' lived realities" (p.1) and the focus of this study was to look in more detail at individual students, their Facebook profiles and how they used them in everyday life. I focused my view to the role Facebook plays more broadly in the student experience of university. I was interested in the changes that go on when students join university, the challenges they face in becoming undergraduate students and the part Facebook plays in this transition. The analytical lens of time was applied to my view of the student experience of this "betwixt" (Palmer et al., 2008) space and time. The choice of Facebook as the research site was important, as through my previous research (Stirling, 2009) I saw how Facebook is intrinsically linked to undergraduate life. I have reflexively built upon the knowledge I gained during my Masters research. Reflexivity has played an important part in my study design, particularly through my understanding of research sites and interrogating my interpretations and perspectives (Alversson & Skoldberg, 2000; Greenbank, 2003).

The structure of the thesis is as follows: It begins with “*A grammar of Facebook*”, a contextual background section explaining and interrogating the many parts, rules and processes of Facebook. This is in two sections; the first, “The Architecture of Facebook” details the Facebook interface and the second, “The Language of Facebook” details some of the key terms used by Facebook users. “A grammar of Facebook” is aimed at supporting readers’ understandings of Facebook, whether they are Facebook users or not. I acknowledge this section is both descriptive and analytical but it has been foregrounded in this manner to aid contextual understanding. There is also a glossary of terms following the references to support readers’ understanding of Facebook “jargon”.

The thesis is then structured in four chapters; Chapter 2, literature review; Chapter 3, methodology; Chapter 4, a presentation of data; and Chapter 5, a discussion of data. Chapter 2 is a review of the key literature, which has influenced me in the planning and analysis of the study. I draw on the views and research of a broad range of scholars from media and communication studies, sociology, psychology, economics, youth studies and education. I do this for two reasons; Facebook is so pervasive in today’s society, especially within the university environment, that scholars in many fields are using it either as the site of their studies or as a method to collect data (Wilson, 2012). Secondly, I find drawing on a range of disciplines offers a rich, multi-disciplinary approach that, coming from a practiced-based design background like myself, appeals to my own approach to research. These scholars offer me a range of differing views and approaches to the same problem. This literature is divided into three broad sections; the first details the use of technology, social media and Facebook in Higher Education. Academic research on the phenomenon of Facebook use sits within a broader body of research into social media and social network site usage and this is detailed here. The body of research into undergraduates’ use of Facebook also links with research into their use of technology and the Internet (see Ipsos Mori, 2008; Selwyn, 2008). I used this body of work to give a contextual background to the intensely technologically mediated world undergraduates inhabit. The second section discusses literature on the undergraduate transition to university, and the experience of this by students, and unpicks the parameters of this “betwixt” (Palmer et al., 2008) time and space and the importance of “social support” (Wilcox et al., 2005) at this time. The third section discusses time and space in HE and draws upon the work of Adam (1995), Massey (1992) and her concept of “space-time” and the work of Lemke (2000) to support the analytical framework of the study. I then conclude the literature review

with a discussion of the implications of my reading on my study design.

The third chapter of the thesis explains my thoughts and plans relating to my research approach and the methodological decisions behind the study and unpicks and problematises a range of influential issues, including the ethical decisions relating to undertaking a multi-sited, connective ethnography (Leander & McKim, 2003). I describe some of the nuances of undertaking an ethnography in a digital field site. I present my two-stage study design, which began with a large-scale digital questionnaire and followed on with a year-long longitudinal connective ethnography of six participants, who I call my Facebook Friends (FbF). I then specify my methods and frameworks of analysis and how these have influenced my understanding of undergraduate Facebook usage. I draw upon two frames of analysis: Time as an analytical framework and social support – the typology of social interactions. I conclude this part with a note on my mixed method approach to data presentation. This chapter may be viewed as slightly longer than the average methodology chapter in a PhD thesis but this is due to the significance of the methodological considerations, which featured in the study.

The fourth chapter, a presentation of data, begins with my “Findings Timeline”. This is an “information graphic” which gives an overview of the relationship between my FbF and how they use Facebook against the six theme of analysis: making friends; administration; disconnection; managing friends; academic study and procrastination and play. “The Facebook Landscape” gives a contextual overview of the large-scale questionnaire responses. This sets up my six FbF stories and presents a temporal journey of the students from the moment they get their exam results in August 2010 through to the end of their first academic year in June 2011. This chapter ends with a reflective story of my research journey in “Eve’s story” and presents some data from my own Facebook Profile to help answer my fifth research question on the possibilities and limitations of Facebook as a research site and a research tool.

A discussion of these stories is presented in the fifth chapter and each of the themes is discussed in detail using the analytical framework I presented previously. Literature is drawn upon to contextualise and theorise about these findings and the implications thereof. This part also ends with a discussion of Eve’s story, exploring and reflecting upon my use of Facebook as a research tool and situating these experiences in current methodological literature on digital ethnographies.

The thesis ends with my conclusion, which is a summary of the research project, highlighting the key findings, presenting my contribution to knowledge and answering the research questions.

I will note that this document is an assemblage of my thoughts (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) of my research process; trying to make sense of what I am doing by tracing previous studies but also attempting to make my own map of my research connections and thoughts. The process of the PhD has been, at times, a messy one but in officially presenting this document I believe a level of clarity has been reached. My approach to both the PhD thesis and this study has been an iterative process, which grew and responded to this assemblage of ideas and experiences.

A grammar of Facebook

This “grammar” of Facebook is not a prescriptive set of rules which Facebook follows, but it is a descriptive explanatory section to aid readers’ understanding of the “architecture” and “language” of the website. This section takes much influence from the approach of Kress & T. van Leeuwen (2006, p.1) in *Reading Images*, where they suggest:

Just as grammars of language describe how words combine in clauses, sentences and texts, so our visual ‘grammar’ will describe the way in which depicted elements – people, places and things – combine in visual ‘statements’ of greater or lesser complexity and extension.

Facebook is a mix of text, visuals, photos, videos, apps and games and this section describes how they come together to become the Facebook practices that I have been studying.

This is presented in two sections; the first, “An Architecture of Facebook”, which describes the interface of Facebook and the many differing spatial, interface elements which come together to make the user experience; and the second, “A Language of Facebook”, details some key terms used by Facebook users. This section, although descriptive in the way that I have chosen to categorise Facebook behaviours, is also analytical. As I mentioned previously, it has prominence at the start of the thesis in order to give a contextual understanding and overview of my perception and interpretation of the site to help situate the reader in this knowledge before commencing the reading of the thesis. The description of Facebook to follow is very much a historical account of what Facebook looked like and how it functioned in 2010 and 2011 when the data collection for this study took place. I mention this here because the Facebook interface has changed dramatically in subsequent years and it is likely to change again. In turn, users’ practices have changed and will continue to do so, influenced by interface developments. It is important to note though, in order for the reader to understand what Facebook looked like in 2010 and 2011. Please feel free to return to this section throughout the thesis if you are unsure of the terminology I use. I would also point you to the “Glossary of Terms”, at the end of the thesis, which gives a written description of key Facebook terminology.

An Architecture of Facebook

Facebook is a social network site, which allows you to connect to the people in your life (Facebook, 2010). Facebook, was initially a closed website which only the students of Harvard University could join. This niche start-up has attracted college and university students to Facebook (boyd and Ellison, 2008). Facebook went live to the general public in the US and then the UK in 2006 and has since grown enormously, and currently has over 1.11 billion monthly active users (Facebook, 2013). In 2010, at the start of this study, there were over 500 million active users (Facebook, 2010). The site is a worldwide phenomenon, the company has floated on the stock exchange, there has been a Hollywood film about the owner, Mark Zuckerberg, the company has a celebrity-like status with unrelenting, daily, media coverage. In 2010, 7.4% of all people in the world were active Facebook users (Wilhelm, 2010) and Facebook claimed “people spend over 700 billion minutes per month on Facebook (Facebook statistics, 2010). Facebook has overtaken the website Google as the most visited website in the USA (Dougherty, 2010).

Architectural terms

Term	Meaning
Wall	It is a space on every user's profile page that allows friends and users themselves to post messages for all to see.
News Feed	The News Feed highlights what's happening to a user's Friends. The News Feed is the first thing a user sees upon logging in to Facebook. The news feed is the main catalyst for all Facebook interaction.
Messages	A private message service which integrates e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging and chat in one.
Chat	An instant message (IM) service, which allows you to type instant messages to your friends who are also online.
Profile	A profile displays a user's personal information and their interactions with friends. Each registered user may have only one profile.
Friends	The people a user connects with through Facebook are their Friends. A user can ask people to accept their Friend request. Generally users know the “Friend” and have met them face-to-face, but not always.
Event	A calendar-based resource that users can add to their profiles, pages and groups that lets them share news about upcoming affairs or social gatherings.

Group	A group is the place for small group communication and for people to share their common interests and express their opinion. It is aimed at non-commercial use.
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How Facebook works

Note: in this thesis, all terms used to describe a Facebook action or grammar will be written with a capital letter to highlight this e.g. Status update.

A new Facebook user signs up for an account at www.facebook.com, the registration process asks for some basic personal information, email and photo and then the user has a Profile (see fig.1).

This profile has a “Wall”. The Wall allows a user to “Share” a “Status update” describing what they are up to. The Status update is text uploaded by a user and can be writing, image, a video or a web link. The Facebook interface allows a user to make connections with people they know (or do not know) and these connections are called Friends; by adding them so that they have access to their Profile. The interface allows both public and private communication between the user and their Facebook Friends. The public communication could be through a “Status update”, which can be seen through the Newsfeed (see fig.2), or on the user’s Profile page, or a comment on another user’s Wall.



Fig.1 My personal Profile, showing my Wall and some Status updates October 2010.



Fig.2 My personal Newsfeed 2010 with each architectural element highlighted.

Private communication takes place through Messages (see fig.3), an email system between Friends and also non-Friends, and Facebook Chat, an instant message (IM) system between Friends (see fig.4). Thus, while non-Friends will not see a user's Wall, they can send a Message. The interactivity between Friends' Posts and Comments triggers a Notification (see fig.5), one of the key actions of keeping users returning to the site; who has interacted with me? The main use of Facebook is to communicate with existing networks, usually people who you meet face-to-face and then continue this relationship on Facebook (Lenhart, 2009; McWilliams, 2009).

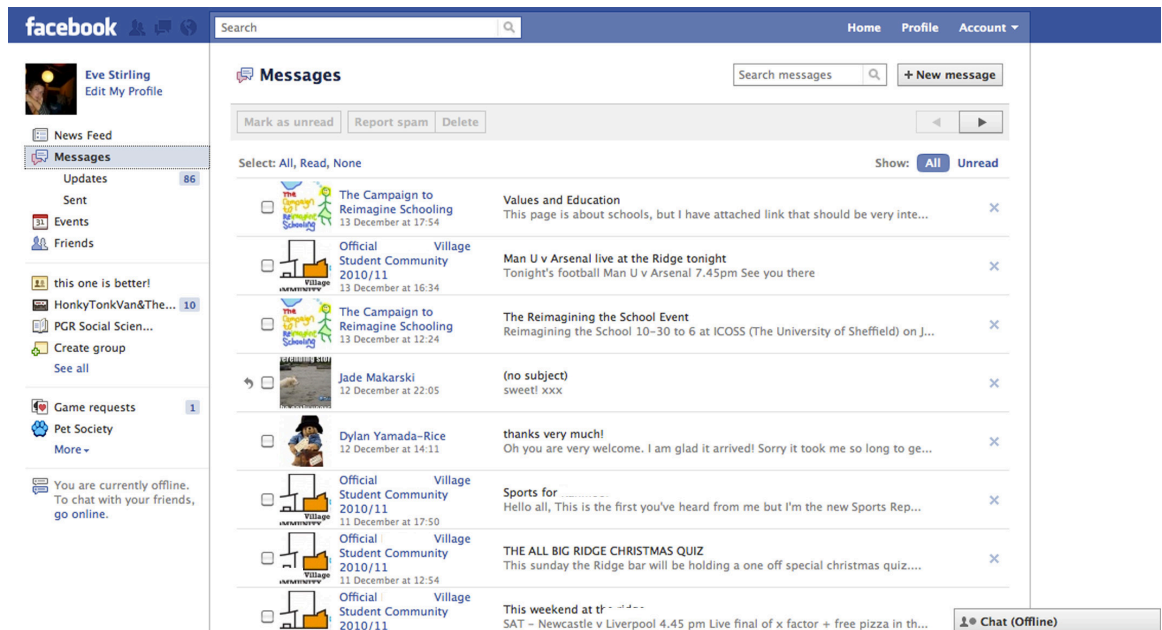


Fig.3 An example of my Messages 2010.



Fig.4 Facebook Chat “pops up” over the News Feed.

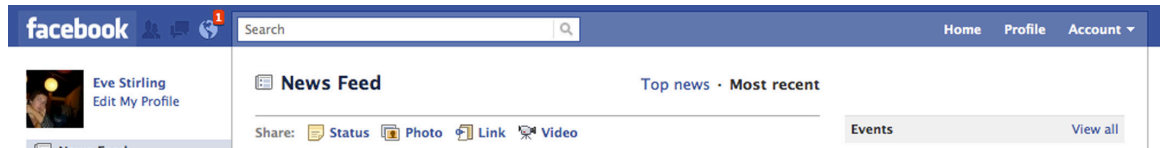


Fig.5 The red notification symbol.

The number changes in response to the number of notifications a user has received.

Facebook allows users to create a Profile and “connect” with other Friends through both private and public means, synchronously and asynchronously. The News Feed makes sure that your Status updates are broadcast to your friends. Friends may share news stories or videos they “Like” from external sites or you may “Share” some of your own photos from an outing at the weekend, for example, by uploading them to your Profile.

A Facebook Event is a calendar-based resource, which lets users share news about upcoming social gatherings. Users can “attend” an Event through clicking on a “Join” button. This may not always mean they will physically be present at the Event but that they support it. An Event may be a Friend’s birthday party or a political demonstration and they will vary in size. More recently, Events have been used by companies for promotional purposes.

A Facebook Group is a separate Profile page for small group communication and for people to share their common interests and express their opinion. It is aimed at non-commercial use. A Group can be open, closed or secret and needs to be run by a Facebook member as an administrator.

The main use of Facebook is to communicate with existing networks, usually people who you meet face-to-face and then continue this relationship on Facebook (Lenhart, 2009).

Facebook can be accessed from a computer or on a smart phone through the web browser but late 2010 to early 2011 saw the introduction and increased use of a smart phone application (app) for Facebook and this meant more people accessed Facebook from a mobile device (Heynen, 2011). This facility allows users to log their location as a Facebook Status in the act of “Checking in”, through using their smart phones’ location based services.

A Language of Facebook use

The ubiquitous use of Facebook in everyday life has led to a Facebook language permeating conversations and the new use of words, specifically linked to Facebook practices.

Language terms

Term	Meaning
Friend	The people a user connects with through Facebook are their Friends.
Tag	To Tag a Friend is to highlight and hyperlink to their Profile. It alerts the user through a Notification. Tagging a friend in one of your photos links the photo to their Facebook Wall and Photos, for example.
Share	To Share is to produce and upload content to your Profile through a Status update.
Post	A user can Post a Photo or Video to their Wall.
Like	A feature that appears as a link next to something you see on Facebook, allowing users to let others know they appreciate it, whether it be a video, a comment or something else.
Comment	Comment is one of the options for users to give feedback on another user's activity; either Status update, photographs or other activity. Clicking "Comment" opens up a text box underneath the activity for you to write in.
Poke	A Poke is a way to interact with your friends on Facebook. It allows one user to virtually poke another. Some consider it flirting.
Check-in	A user can Check-in to a location using a smart phone. This shows up on a user's Wall and News Feed and alerts their Friends to their location.

The "Wall" is also a space where user's Friends leave updates and comments, and these in turn can be Commented upon or Liked by the user or the user's Friends. To Like something, you simply click the blue Like next to a Comment or Status (see fig.6). This Commenting and Liking on Friends' updates and comments is a key activity on Facebook.

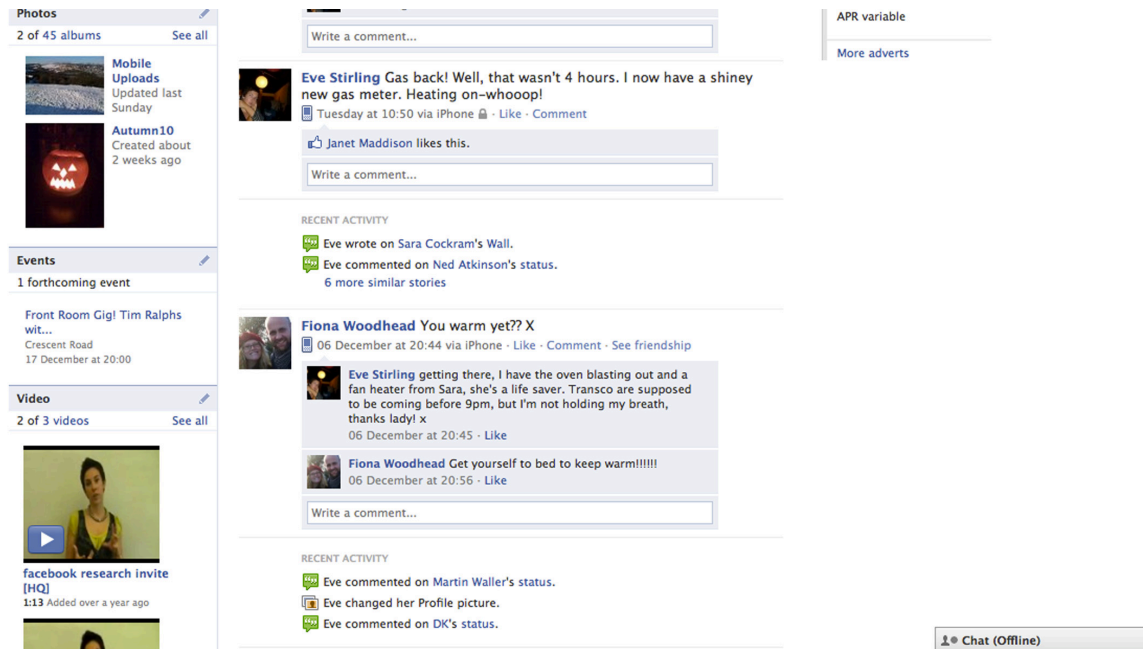


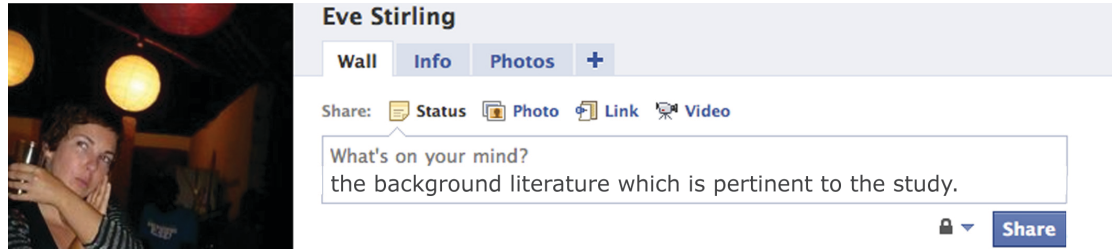
Fig.6 The blue Like is a button to give feedback to the author of the Post.

These Facebook grammatical actions and language are highlighted in Chapter 4, 'The presentation of data', where they will be presented in this manner:

RECENT ACTIVITY marks a Facebook grammatical action

This section is a descriptive overview of the Grammar of Facebook and I return to these definitions throughout the thesis. Readers may need to return to this section to understand some of the key terms used. There is also a glossary of terms at the end of the thesis.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW



A range of scholars from media and communication studies, sociology, psychology, economics, youth studies and education have influenced my study. My review is presented in three sections; the first details the use of technology, social media and Facebook in Higher Education (HE). The second section discusses literature on the undergraduate student experience, student engagement and transition to university. The third section discusses time and space in HE. I then conclude this chapter with a summary discussion of the implications of the literature on my study design.

Technology in HE

Academic research into undergraduates' use of Facebook sits within the broader field of research into social media and social network site use and this body of work is reviewed in this section. Research into students' use of Facebook is linked with research into undergraduates' use of technology and the Internet in HE and I begin this section with an overview of this work to give a contextual background to the relevance of the research into Facebook and to reinforce the nascent nature of this research area.

The "net generation" student experience of technology in HE

The life of a contemporary undergraduate is more technologically advanced, influenced and "mediated" than ever before (CLEX, 2009; Ipsos MORI, 2008; Selwyn, 2008, Ziegler, 2007). The most technologically embedded generation to date; these students have been tagged with a range of names from; Millennials (Taylor and Keeter, 2010), Digital Native (Prensky, 2001), The Net-Generation (Tapscott, 2008), The Google Generation (Rowlands et al., 2008) and Homo Zappiens (Veen & Vrakking, 2006). These tags suggest that these students are positively and easily engaged in this technologically advanced world, but I believe the terms should be used with caution and are not always helpful in describing students. The videos by Wesch (2009) suggest that "the web is us/using us" and, as such, that we are still coming to terms with these fast-paced changes. In another video, "a vision of students today", we see

the conflicting experiences of students' use of technology in and outside of the university environment. Wesch (2009) highlights how experiences in these two domains are often different.

Technology is now pervasive and ubiquitous in the lives of undergraduate students. Wireless networking across the campus accessed via mobile devices, podcasting of lectures to iTunesU, online learning through Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) to communicate and collaborate synchronously and asynchronously with peers and lecturers and social networking sites (SNS) to hang out in, learn, discuss, document and deconstruct the university experience. The predominant literature regarding technology in HE is positive and stresses the potentials for technology to be transformative within the sector (Bradwell, 2009; CLEX, 2009; Ipsos MORI, 2008; JISC, 2009), with a push towards institutional change with the integration of social software and the accompanying attributes to learning and teaching. These reports document examples of the use of social software in education: wikis used for group collaboration, Facebook groups as tutorial discussion spaces and the use of a Ning (www.ning.com) networking space supplementing the university Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). CLEX (2009a) states that "young people inhabit the Web 2.0 world with enviable ease" (p.1) and that these technologies enable "instant communication, collaboration, information creation, participation and sharing" (p.1). But there are tensions in viewing these findings in such a positive light. The data from the majority of these reports is survey-based and not longitudinal and I believe richer data from a different order of research is needed to examine the impact of these technologies.

Selwyn (2010) proposes a counter-argument to this transformatory discourse and he stresses the importance of continuing to examine ICT use in HE and suggests we should challenge the assumption that "ICT is inherently beneficial and 'a good thing' for all individuals" (p.36). He stresses the importance of the "socially shaped nature of an individual's engagement with ICTs and acknowledges that students' perceptions and understanding of the affordances of ICT use are likely to be organisationally and socially based" (p.37). There is a situated nature to technology use by students and one should not presume that all students use or benefit from interacting with technology.

These technological changes have taken place in a relatively short period of time, as a result of which there is little time to reflect on the impact of these technologies on learning and the student experience. What expectations do learners have of these

technologies, the institution, each other and themselves? This piece of research aims to explore a small part of this in my research participants' use of Facebook. Facebook sits within this "digital environment" of an undergraduate student (Murdock, 2006) and this digital environment is inherent and intrinsic in their everyday "mundane" life (Beer & Burrows, 2007). The next section goes on to detail briefly the use of social network sites in HE, as Facebook is a social network site and fits within this section of literature.

Social network sites in HE

Over recent years, the phenomenon of social networking and social network sites has received much attention from academic researchers (boyd & Ellison, 2007; boyd & Hargatti, 2006; Mazer et al., 2009; Paasek et al., 2009; Selwyn, 2009; Subrahmanyam, 2008; Vie, 2008; Wang et al., 2012). Social network sites are becoming more and more a part of the HE environment through use of web 2.0 for teaching and learning, marketing and promotional purposes (CLEX, 2009; Moran et al., 2011). boyd and Ellison (2007) wrote a now seminal definition of a social network site (SNS), describing the social interaction therein and the structure of a SNS. More recently, they (Ellison and boyd, 2013, p.153) have updated the definition as, given the development of SNS and the way we are now, a more refined definition is required:

A social network site is a networked communication platform in which participants;

1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by others users, and/or system-level data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site.

I present the up-to-date definition in this thesis, as I believe it suitably defines Facebook as a SNS. Facebook is a bounded system. Bounded in this case means it is not an open access website. You need to "join", to be a member and with that you need a password to log in. I see the predominant focus of Facebook as being to articulate and visualise existing social networks as opposed to using the site to meet new people, as the site is intrinsically linked with face-to-face relationships.

Research into Facebook falls into the broader category of research into social network use and, although still an emerging research area, there are a range of compelling studies detailing undergraduates' use of Facebook in relation to the university environment and this section details these.

Selwyn and Grant (2009) contend that “the use of social networking [...] continues to be a controversial element of the digital education landscape” (p.3), and that SNS are “worthy of close academic scrutiny - not least in order to gain a clearer understanding of their social and cultural significance in the contemporary digital age” (p.3). Meyer (2010) is in agreement with this and suggests, “we need a better understanding of how Facebook can be used for a variety of educational purposes” (p.177). The ubiquitous nature of Facebook within student life in Higher Education (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Madge et al., 2009; Selwyn, 2009) I find astounding, but not surprising. The site is very versatile and useful and that is one of the reasons I believe it is immensely popular. Research findings show that 91% of undergraduate students describe themselves as using SNS ‘regularly’ or ‘sometimes’ (Ipsos MORI, 2008, p.10), although this data is from 2008, if it is compared to more recent Ofcom (2010) findings that 40% of adults use a social networking profile, it is significantly higher. A study by Finlay and Jenkins (2008) found that for students at The University of Sheffield, social network sites have become “taken for granted, as a part of everyday life” (p.263), with 90% of those interviewed being members of one or more sites. This is in agreement with many other studies (Ipsos Mori, 2008; CLEX, 2009). It is not surprising to me as anecdotally I have seen Facebook become the most viewed site on students’ PCs in the university library and in all of the classes I teach, across two universities, all the students without exception say they have a Facebook Profile (in 2010). I move the discussion on now to explore the literature related to the phenomenon of Facebook use in and by students in HE.

Facebook in Higher Education

The literature on Facebook use and HE covers a range of topics, from the use of Facebook for and to support teaching and learning (CLEX, 2009; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Manca & Ranierit, 2013; Mazer et al., 2007; Selwyn, 2007; Vie, 2008), the relationship between staff and student use of the site (Hewitt & Forte, 2006), the impact of Facebook on academic achievement (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Karpinski, 2009; Pasek, 2009) and the social implication of using Facebook at university (Ellison et al, 2007; Madge et al., 2009; Pemeppek et al., 2009; Steinfield et al., 2008; Yang & Brown, 2013).

The use of Facebook for learning and its educational value has received much attention (see review by Manca & Ranierit, 2013). This debate shifts between the more formal approaches of Facebook as a Learning Management System (LMS) (Wang et

al., 2012), to the informal use of the site for collaborative classroom activities (Lampe et al., 2011). Research on student views of Facebook as a learning tool has primarily found that it is first and foremost for social purposes, sometimes used for informal learning or student-to-student discussions of academic matters but definitely not for formal teaching purposes between staff and students involving formal assessment (Madge et al., 2009). Much of the literature on peer support in HE positions this notion as a formal support mechanism (De Smet et al., 2008). Work by Timmis (2012, p.4) suggests that peer support is often better placed when it crosses the “formal-informal learning divide”, and this can be defined as “offering mutual help and assistance at a social, cultural and affective level, involving both communication and collaboration amongst peers, working together” (ibid). This formal-informal divide is explored within this study.

The following section discusses the research studies, which are relevant to this study under the following headings; being a student, social support and communication.

Being a student

Research in this area shows that Facebook is a key tool for being a student (Selwyn, 2009). Selwyn’s (2009) findings were that Facebook forms a vital part of student life experience, situated within the “identity politics of being a student” (2009, p.1) “allowing roles to be learnt, values understood” (p.15). Selwyn (2009) proposed that students’ use of Facebook was not cause for alarm and that it was “business as usual” (p.15) but this business went on, on Facebook. Students were discussing similar things on Facebook as they were face-to-face and presenting themselves as students normally do.

Kirschner & Karpinski’s (2010) findings suggest that “Facebook is not a separate activity” (p.1241) in the lives of the student participants in their research on the impact of Facebook on academic performance. Their quantitative data shows there is a significant negative relationship between Facebook use and academic performance but their qualitative data reports Facebook as having no effect on academic performance. Despite this, the theme of the paper is one of the negative impacts of Facebook on academic performance. The intrinsic link between Facebook and being a student is woven into every area of student life and is highly significant in relation to the social side of university. Facebook is a space for social interaction, which is viewed by some as being to the detriment of academic performance.

Social support

The social role Facebook plays at university is a key element in a range of studies. Madge et al. (2009) found that 55% of respondents made “virtual” university friends before they started university, and they report the usage of Facebook by students was for “enriching their socialisation process” (p.146). Vie’s (2008) findings are in agreement, stating that for students joining Facebook “acted as a rite of passage” (p.17) into HE. This is also backed-up by boyd (2007) who suggests students made this move from Bebo or Myspace before they started university as part of the transition to Higher Education. It is worth noting here that these findings were relevant when I began this study but that for students starting university in 2013, the majority would already be members of Facebook. Madge and colleagues (2009) say of Facebook, that it “is more for socialising and talking to friends about work than for actually doing work” (p.145). West and colleagues’ (2009) findings replicate this, showing that friendship is highly significant during students’ time at university, and Facebook supports this.

Woodley & Meredith (2012) suggest that Facebook is a medium whereby students in transition can be supported by the university through giving them information and access to networks. Facebook can support students in their social network development, which is important to “develop their sense of group belonging” (p.1) in the early stages of starting university.

Communication

Communication via Facebook is examined by Roblyer et al. (2010), who explore the potential for the use of Facebook as a communication tool between faculty staff and students at university. They propose that there is a disconnect between faculty and student use of Facebook to communicate, with students being the heavier users, and also find that, “students see the potential [for Facebook use] more than do the faculty” (p.138). They contend that Facebook has “the potential to become a valuable resource to support their educational communications and collaborations with faculty” (p.134). These findings are backed up by a recent piece of research by the Times Higher Education magazine, which found Facebook is used by university admissions to communicate with students long before they start university, “the key is to help make future students feel part of the student community long before fresher’s week” (Fern, 2010). In the report, James Allan, digital strategist at Mission Media, states, “the British youth is actively discussing higher education online and very few universities are taking the initiative to join that conversation” (ibid). This literature is in line with the

transformational notions of the technology in HE reports discussed earlier in this section (CLEX, 2009) but Cheung et al. (2010) contended that there “is relatively little theory-driven empirical research available to address this new type of communication and interaction phenomenon” (p.1). They draw on social influence theory (Kelman, 1958) and social presence to explain why students use Facebook. Their findings suggest there is a “We-Intention” of collective behaviour and that “social presence is the most important factor that determines students’ usage of Facebook” (p.5). This collective behaviour of social presence on Facebook is a theme I explore in the findings from my study.

Raynes-Glodie (2010) describes the “cultural phenomenon” that is Facebook and goes on to explain that her findings suggest how increasingly important it is for “one’s social life to be on the site”. She also suggests that Facebook is now the default method of communication as you can rely on Facebook to get in contact with a person. She draws upon Bigge’s (2006) notion of a “narrative of inevitability” and she proposes; “the cost of non-participation is so high that it is not a matter of if you will join Facebook, but when?” Bigge’s (2006) paper is based on a range of different social networking sites that he “makes strange...(defamiliarize)” to interrogate them. He asks, in light of the positive writings about social network sites and youth, (see boyd, 2006; Jenkins, 2006) “at what point does it become impossible to *not* be a member?” This is an area that is also explored in the findings of this study.

The nature of this digitally-led life leads me to wonder how technology impacts on and affects students’ everyday lives and particularly the link between the pervasive, ubiquitous and aggregated nature of Facebook in relation to social integration into university. What affordances and constraints does Facebook offer a new undergraduate student?

Higher Education Transitions

I now move to a discussion of research relating to the important phase of first-year student transition into university life. This literature sits within the broader body of work examining the student experience at university and I begin this section by contextualising the HE sector at the present time before going on to present some of the key concepts relating to the notion of transition. This literature is important since this study explores the potential role of Facebook as a mediating factor in the first-year transition process. The literature suggests that the journey to university is such an influential time in a young person’s life and this section reviews some of the key

perspectives relating to this. I discuss key terms influential to my study and some of the literature surrounding integration into university life as well as some of the related concepts and tensions.

The Higher Education (HE) system in England is the focus for this piece of research. Over the last twenty years there have been significant changes in the University sector, which have had major impacts on those who attend. These include, but are not limited to: polytechnics being given university status in 1992; the introduction of fee paying in 1998; the government's introduction of the widening participation agenda "Aim Higher" in 2004; the growth of international applicants and greater importance placed on employability (Parry, 2006). The most recent fee increase in 2012, although not directly relevant to the data collection in this study, is impacting on the framing of the sector more broadly (Bradley, 2013; Browne, 2010).

These changes have all led to an increase of students in the sector (Higginbottom, 2009) and resulted in a keener focus on "the student experience" in Higher Education (BIS, 2009; Yorke and Longden, 2008). I review the literature relating to the first-year experience in HE; this group of students is a particular focus of the corpus of research due to unhappy experiences sometimes leading to "dropping out" of university and thus impacting on retention rates. This group has become a focus for university and policy makers in this "marketised" sector, as a loss of students means a loss of money (Higginbottom, 2009). These students are also of interest as, starting university in 2010, they were some of the first students (and this will only increase) to be exposed to and use the ubiquitous technologies through their schooling and into university life; smart phones, laptops, having use of their own pc and wireless internet, as discussed in the previous section of the literature review.

Transitions and integration into university life

Transition into HE has been the focus for many scholars seeking to help us understand this complex time in many students' lives, entering university life. A prominent author in this field is Vincent Tinto. He uses the notion of transition to explore and problematise the issue of student non-retention at university, that is, those who start a course but often fail to complete the first year of study. His early work (Tinto, 1975, 1987) explored the relationship between the university environment and the academic and social worlds and structures of the institutions and the individual students. His primary finding was related to integration and the importance of the interactions between students and

others within the institution, particularly in the first year. He found that being involved in both the social and academic environments was important.

Although highly regarded, some of Tinto's key concepts have been challenged by new ways of thinking about transition and integration. Tinto (1993) suggests transition is "a period of passage between the old and the new, before the full adoption of new norms and patterns of behaviours and after the onset of separation from the old ones" (p.97). He suggests that integration was originally proposed as an immersion into university life (Tinto, 1988), eschewing that which went before. However, more recent studies (Nora, 2001; Waterman, 2004) have found that for some students, being connected to their previous lives and communities is an important factor in their successful transition to university life. Nora (2001) also counters that Tinto's (1993) concept of transition is problematic as he concurrently suggests that both disengagement from past communities and support from family and peers are both important to a successful transition to university. I see this as highlighting some of the key tensions of this time period in a young person's life. The students are pulled in many directions when being supported by structures from their home lives whilst also finding support from new relationships at university.

Another critique of Tinto's work is that he views the social and academic systems of the university environment as separate (Tucker, 1999). Tucker suggests that students often have a sense of community, which interweaves through both the academic and the social spheres, and Longden (2008) proposes that these dimensions are "intertwined and interdependent of each other" (p.68). Wilcox and colleagues' (2005) findings suggest that "equal emphasis needs to be placed on successful integration into the social world of the university as into the academic world" (p.707) and that at this complex time "social support" (p.709) through course and house mates is vital. In light of the predominance of Facebook in the lives of undergraduates, I explored what social support Facebook offers undergraduates.

What is agreed amongst researchers is that this time period is a challenging one for new students. Longden (2008) suggests the transition to university "is a testing time" (p.58). Gourlay (2009) suggests that transition often involves challenges, struggle and instability and this has an impact on a student's sense of identity. Barnett (2007) also describes transition as challenging a student's sense of self, since HE can be a world of uncertainty. Gale and Parker define transition as "the ability to navigate change" (p.4).

I take this chance to acknowledge that the focus of much of this literature is on full-time students. This literature could be seen as a narrow view, given the changing landscape of HE, but there is a similar emphasis in this study and so the focus on this demographic is relevant. Modes of integration for these students are likely to be different to those who are mature or who remain living in their family homes.

First-year undergraduate experience and “transition”

Within the literature on student experience, there is a range focusing on the first year and, as mentioned above, this group of students is of particular interest to me as I see them as new to the practices of university. Although already Facebook users, they have not experienced university life, so they offer me an insight into the significance of Facebook in undergraduate life.

Much of the literature and research work undertaken on the first-year experience is based on first year, full-time undergraduate students. Longden's (2008) findings show that individual students are equally, if not more so, responsible for the quality of their first-year experience and external factors contribute the least. Longden (2008) proposes that Tinto's (1997) notions of social and academic integration are still a “powerful theoretical model against which the student experience of higher education can be measured” (p.67).

The corpus of literature relating to this first-year experience (Ainley, 2008; Christie, 2008; Mann, 2001; Palmer et al, 2009; Smith, 2006; Ulriksen, 2009; Wilcox et al., 2005; Yorke, 2008) concentrates on the transition to university and the student viewpoint of this. The focus of this research ranges from the experience of transition being purely related to learning and teaching (Ainley, 2008; Mann, 2001), developed from the “problems” seen in integrating new students into university culture from a learning and teaching perspective and can be seen to be focusing on making the university experience more “effective” in the current target driven culture (Smith, 2006). Others explore notions of “belonging” or “being” or “entering” HE and the university (Christie, 2008; Palmer et al., 2009; Skyrme, 2007), and the importance of social support in the first year (Wilcox, 2005). Gale and Parker (2012) propose that there are three types of transition described in research literature. These are; transition as “becoming”, transition as “induction”, and transition as “development”, and they propose the first to be the most “student sympathetic account” (p.1). I find this notion of “becoming a student” helpful when conceptualising the transition process of the first year.

Longden (2008) suggests “the transition from home to university is a critical period for some students when they are required to adjust to the new culture of higher education” (p.68) and this transition period is likely to influence the following years’ experiences and successes of the students (Haggis, 2006; Hultberg et al., 2008). And due to these experiences, Brooman and Darwent (2013) propose that a successful transition into higher education is a process of “acclimatisation during the first year” (p.2) and that students need to be included and active in the process as opposed to being “passive receivers of information and paperwork” (ibid). Nora (2001) suggests that, within the transition period of the first year, support and encouragement from “significant others” (p.50) is of importance to both social and academic adjustment, both positive and negative. Tucker (1999) offers the view that a “sense of community” (p.164) is important in a student’s success at university. This can be “anything which made students feel a sense of belonging to the new educational environment” (ibid). This notion of a sense of belonging is also echoed in the concepts of engagement and becoming a student (Gale and Parker, 2012).

Thomas (2012) also suggests a successful student will have “a strong sense of belonging” (p.6) and that this may come from maintaining pre-university relationships. They also suggest that the use of “communication media to maintain old friends” (p.16) may be a reason for this. Tinto (2006) acknowledges that although we know social and academic integration matter, we know less about what to do to achieve this or what it might look like in different institutional settings. I hope this study adds to this knowledge.

I see the terms social and academic integration as being linked to the notion of engagement; being involved is an important part of integrating. Trowler and Trowler (2010) go further to suggest that student engagement not only enhances the student experience but also boosts the learning outcomes and development of students and the reputation of the institution. They propose there are a number of elements of engagement which improve outcomes from students and these include: “academic challenge, interacting with staff (especially outside the classroom), participating in extra-curricular activities and interacting with a range of diverse peers” (p.8). These differing elements could be seen as difficult to measure and research. They are the “lived realities” of which Gale and Parker (2012, p.1) suggest future research in the field needs to focus on. These elements are embedded in students’ lives. Bensimon (2009) noted that productive engagement was an important mechanism for students to

develop feelings about their peers, lecturers and institutions, created a sense of belonging, and also offered opportunities for learning and development. It is this sense of belonging that the research suggests is key at this transition stage.

Roberts (2007) contends that, “there is still a singular, normative student way of life and an associated student culture which separates the participants from the rest of their age group” (p.200). But Harvey et al (2006) argue that there is not a “monolithic first-year experience” (cited in Yorke and Longden, 2008, p.52) but “a plurality of first-year experiences that reflect the diversity in students’ lives” (ibid). These two notions offer me a framework for viewing the experiences of the study participants. I wanted to use the study to help me explore whether there is a plurality of first-year Facebook use or a singular normative student way of Facebook life.

I am interested in researching the student experience as I feel many decisions and policies are made without ideas being sought from the student body and that students have much to offer policy makers and university management. Researchers have found that not all students have a positive experience when they start university and this can be because there is a “gap” between the student expectations and their initial experiences (Forrester, et al, 2005; Lesse, 2010; Lowe and Cook, 2003).

I take these concepts forward to help me explain the role Facebook plays in helping students navigate change within the transition period of the first year and in becoming a student.

Liminality

Liminality is the state of in-betweenness and ambiguity. The term has its history in anthropological literature and has been accredited to Victor Turner (1967) in his ethnographies of African tribes. Turner (1967) developed the social anthropological notion of liminality meaning “betwixt and between” (Beech, 2011, p.286). The liminal process is ritualistic (Van Gennep, 1960) and describes the passing from one identity state to another. Beech (2011) describes this three-stage process:

separation, characterized by symbols of detachment; liminality, in which the ritual subject or ‘liminar’ is ambiguous and passes through the realm that has few or none of the attributes of the ‘before’ and ‘after’ states; and aggregation, the

consummation of passage. At this stage the liminar has reached a new identity position and they are expected to adopt certain norms (p.287).

Carnes (2004) describes some of society's liminal institutions as religious rites, theatre and sports activities. He says their rules can "transcend those of society" (p.4). Liminal spaces (places), allow people to "escape from the rigidity of social structures...giving freedom to invent new solutions to old problems or regard familiar things in new ways" (p.4). I see university in this manner, a place to try new things and be inventive.

Liminoid

More recently Turner (1982) developed his description and definition of liminal to liminoid. Both are ways of describing practices, which can be seen as "rites of passages", but liminal is more widely used to describe a ritualistic rite of passage, seen in traditional societies, such as a Bar mitzvah. Liminoid is used to describe a more contemporary rite of passage, the sort which we might see within our leisure time. The nature of these leisure rituals still involve a change in status but may be the bonding between work colleagues or the humorous behaviour of actors in a play (Turner, 1982). Turner's original use of the concept of liminality was related to rites of passage, but this has now developed into a concept that refers more broadly to the notion of "in-betweeness".

I take the term liminal to describe this in-between space or way of being and the term liminoid in the more playful sense of ritual or practice.

Liminality in Higher Education

Developing the concept of liminality for Higher Education, Palmer et al (2009) draw on empirical data and use this to explore the first year transition as a betwixt space of "liminality in a student's transition into the university environments of academic and student life" (p.37). The student is suspended in a space in-between the previous life and identity of home, and the new life and identity of a student. Before they finally feel like a "fully fledged member of university life" (p.37). This can cause tensions and problems for some students and end up with the student feeling that they don't "belong". Christie et al. (2006) describe this integration and transition period as a process of "being and becoming" (p.567) a university student, through which you "come to know a new community of practice" (ibid). The belonging and becoming

process (see also Becker et al., 1961; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 10; Sikes and Sikes-Sheard, 2008) offers an explanation for some of the tensions of this transition space. I build on this discussion of the term liminality in more detail in the following section on time and space in HE.

This section has detailed the literature on a small section of HE transitions and offers a lens for researching the importance of social support, which Facebook offers in the integration of a new undergraduate into a “fully fledged member of university life” (Palmer et al., 2009, p.37). The concept of liminality was introduced to support the exploration of the first year as a liminal space and time. The next section discusses the concepts of time and space and how these terms are important to the framing of this study.

Time and Space in HE

The focus of this study is the first academic year of an undergraduate’s life in Higher Education (HE). This transitional period is full of temporal references; the new beginnings, leaving past friends and histories behind and looking forward to the future career and life beyond. University life could be perceived as a liminal period; a threshold to cross before entering a “professional life” beyond. This period of time could be constructed as a space. Students find themselves in what appears to be a predominantly social situation; there are new expectations of them and new ways of working.

In this part of the literature review, I draw on work suggesting how time could be used as a lens through which to understand students’ university experiences and how the concept of space-time (Massey, 1992) is integral to this understanding.

My original research focus was on identity and I drew on the work of Goffman (1959) to frame my research approach. This shift to time and space was deemed necessary when, through the data collection and analysis processes, I noticed how important time was. The following literature has helped me explore this theme.

Time is a constant in our lives and yet, as Adam (1992) suggests, there is no single time, but many varying interpretations of this socially constructed phenomenon. In this section I use five sub-headings to organise the literature; key definitions of time; time and everyday life; time and education, time and space, transition, and liminality.

To begin, I draw on the work of Adam (1995) to offer some key definitions of time, looking at the western calendar and clock time. I then explore Adam's (1995) notions of "my, our and other time" (p.12). I look to the work of Lemke (2000) for helpful terms to draw on when discussing time and everyday life. The relationship between time and education is then discussed, again drawing on the work of Adam (1995), who offers the view that through "daily educational practice" the "dominant temporal structures and norms of society are absorbed, maintained, re-created and changed" (p.59). The relationship between time and space is explored, drawing on the work of Doreen Massey (1992), who proposes space and time are inseparable, offering an alternative view of space, as space-time. This is particularly pertinent to my research lens, as through exploring students' Facebook use I have come to understand Facebook as a space. The fifth section looks at transition and the concept of liminality. Linking back to the literature I detailed in the previous section on transition and the first-year experience I have found the concept of liminality very useful in understanding the space-times of the first-year experience and Facebook.

To conclude this section of the literature review I explore why time is an appropriate analytical frame for this study and detail the link between space-time and the transitional period of liminality, which can be seen in the first-year experience (Palmer et al, 2009). I draw on the work of Miller (2011) as an example of work that explores the relationship between Facebook and time and brings ideas from this together with the work of Adam (1995) and Lemke (2000) to propose two concepts for analysis to take forward: *The Social Analysis of Facebook Time* (Adam, 1995) and *Facebook Timescales* (Lemke, 2000). I end by summarising the usefulness of these terms to my research questions.

Key definitions of time

I begin this section by taking the sociologist Barbara Adam's view of the social analysis of time. I also draw on Lemke's (2000) sociolinguistic view of timescales.

Time is the most widely used noun in the English language (OED, 2004); it is embedded in our habits and rituals. We think in "timings" of life (a child, a teenager, a student, a mother). There is the "time" to do something, the "time" in-between. We measure our schooling and working lives through hours and minutes, marked by a timetable, bell or contract.

Adam (1995) argues that time is a social construct. It is complex, multi-faceted and woven through every part of social life (Adam, 1995). Time can be cyclical or linear, it is used and controlled as a resource and is “simultaneously experienced and constituted, abstracted and reified” (p.15). Adam (1995) proposes that time is often overlooked in social science research and she draws our attention to not taking for granted the clock-time approach. She offers the view that we need to look beyond Western time as a given backdrop to social life and to problematise time and its relationship to the research in hand (Adam, 1995).

Adam (1995) offers the view that time can be seen through three differing lenses – “My”, “Our” and “Other” time (p.12). My time is my present experiences, my past histories and my future expectations and dreams. My time is what I experience and, therefore, the lens or template by which I construct and locate others’ experiences (Adam, 1995). “Our” time is that of the environment and the social. In this research project, this is the context of the university and the internal and external influences therein. And “other” time is “the distant stranger” or land we might be researching, in my case, “other” time is that of my research participants, Facebook and my construction of these. Adam (1995) states the importance of getting to know the “backcloth of ‘our’ times, upon which other times are constructed” (p.19). Part of this backcloth is the Facebook interface where my participants live out their “other” times.

“Clock time”, Adam (1995) proposes, is a “social expression” of “our time” (p.24). It is linear and precise, an extension of calendar time, and is in contrast to the more natural cycles we experience, such as the seasons and birth and death (p.24). The allocation of time on calendar and clock time is dominant but not everything happens in relation to these. Adam (1995) draws attention to other types of time beyond clock and calendar time and uses the term “when time”. “When time” does have a relationship with “clock time” but is linked to the “norms, practices and values of those involved” (p.22). “When time” is more cyclical and less linear, linked to nature and cultures; “knowledge of the past and anticipations of its consequences, all are brought to bear on calculations about the future” (p.22). When time is looking forward to the future and backward to the past. All these experiences and knowledge combine to be “inextricably interwoven in judgments about what constitutes the “right” time to engage in certain activities” (ibid). I see this concept as linked to my understanding of being a university student and it is important in the temporal sequencing of activities and experiences. For example, a new student should engage in the first week of university “fresher’s

week” activities to ensure they meet new people and make friends. This is obviously not the “only” way to behave but the expectation and the norm nonetheless.

Time and everyday life

This study is grounded in everyday, social interactions. Lemke (2000) draws on two terms, “timescale” and “ecosocial systems”, to describe the everyday. A timescale ranges from a heartbeat to a conversation, to an education or a relationship (Lemke, 2000, p.273). Lemke (2000) asks how these events add up to “social life?”, and, “on how many different timescales is our social life organized?” (p.273). The timescales in an undergraduate’s life might span from the time spent writing and sending a text message to a chance meeting in the library and time spent there, to a study group or the time it takes to prepare an assignment for submission.

The “human ecosocial system” (p.274) is based on the model of an ecosystem (a coral reef, for example). Lemke proposes that people who are linked by the same communication network may interact far more than those who are spatially closer (their neighbours, for example). He proposes a “dynamical theory” (p.275) approach to observing an ecosocial system, whereby “every process, action, social practice, or activity occurs on some timescale” and that an ecosocial system is interdependent and can be described by asking “what’s going on, what’s participating and how, and how one going-on is interdependent with another?” (p.275). The social practices are hyperlinked and relational. This could be observed in the university setting through undergraduates’ communications across their university experience; with lecturers, friends, student services, parents and friends from home.

Time and education

The relationship between education and time involves “norms, experiences and the joining of life worlds” (Adam, 1995, p.66). Clock time is a dominant theme in compulsory education. Adam (1995) states:

the institutional structures and practices of Western-style education work to socialize, habituate and train young people into the clock-time approach to time which, in turn, had the effect of pushing into oblivion the myriad of times that make up the temporal complexity of everyday life (p.7/8).

It could be said that time is dominant in an undergraduate's life. There is the structure of the academic year, taught class timetables and examinations. Time controls and yet frees students from existing expectations of time keeping.

Within the education system there are other timings that exist beyond the calendar, timetable and clock. Adam (1995) describes these as "norms for timing, sequencing and prioritizing" (p.66) and that they "imply an understanding of time that acknowledges that 'you cannot step into the same river twice', that the past and future are inseparably tied to the present, and that there is a 'right' time for everything" (p.66). I see the transition to university for my participants as something they have undertaken in their life sequence. This was their future and it is now their present (and will, inevitably, be their past).

Adam (1995) suggests that we look beyond the dominant time of the clock and explore the implicit temporalities of educational practice, such as time as: "lived, experienced, generated, known, reckoned, allocated, controlled and used as abstract exchange value" (p.60). These norms, habits and traditions are particularly visible in HE, from fresher's week at the start to the graduation ceremony at the end.

The transition period for first-year students is socially constructed as an important "time" in their lives by parents, friends, the media and educational researchers (Brooks, 2002; Cheeseman, 2010; Preskey, 2013). A student may be moving away from home for the first time, having a chance to experience different norms from their previous experiences. It is a process whereby the students come to understand how to use their time, be that in academic life or university social life. They have a great deal more independence and the chance to "manage" their time and the previous learned "clock-time" approach can be challenged.

There has been a breadth of literature dedicated to the relationship between time and space but I have chosen to focus on the work of Massey (1992), which is detailed in the next section.

Time and space

Although time is the main lens for my analytical frame, my view of Facebook as a space means that, thus far in my work, space has been a constant in the background. I feel in this discussion of time I need to pay attention to it as a concept and particularly

its relationship to time. Space is a contested term and one that is often used without definition (Massey, 1992). Massey proposes, “space and time are inextricably interwoven...holding the two in tension” (p.77). Massey (1992) offers the view that space and time are inseparable, offering an alternative view of space, as space-time. It is the interrelations between the two, which are important; space is not an absolute, it is relational, as is time (Massey, 1992). I see that attending to space as well as time in my analysis of Facebook is particularly pertinent in light of the many spaces which the students inhabit and where they use Facebook. Having an understanding that the two concepts are integrated adds a layer of complexity to the analysis but also mirrors the multiplicity of Facebook use. Massey’s (1992) work on space-time gives me an understanding that time and space do not stand alone and that I must pay attention to both. Massey (2005) proposes space can be conceptualised in three ways;

First, we recognize space as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny...Secondly, that we understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity. Without space, no multiplicity, without multiplicity, no space. If space is indeed the product of interrelations, then it must be predicated upon the existence of plurality. Multiplicity and space as co-constitutive. Thirdly, that we recognize space is always under construction. Precisely because space on this reading is a product of relations-between, relations which are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out, it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished, never closed so perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far (p.9).

These conceptualisations of interrelations, multiplicity and space being “under-construction” have influenced my thinking when coming to understand Facebook and the practices which go on there. I present an explanation of a Facebook Group as a space and a place in the following section to support this view.

A Facebook Group as a space and a place

Within research into digital spaces, I see terms such as virtual, online and offline as unhelpful. I want to draw attention to the real and lived experiences of space. Massey

(2005) proposes space and place are both “concrete, grounded, real, lived” (2005, p.185). The digital space of Facebook is not “out there” and unreal but geographically grounded in our real lived experiences and attention should be paid to it as such.

The Facebook Group is conceptualised as a space within the larger interface architecture of Facebook. It sits alongside a student’s Facebook Profile and is accessed from the News Feed page. Within the larger scale, the Group sits within the digital spaces of a student’s browser. Alongside the other websites a student is browsing and alongside the computer programs the student is using. The spaces are bounded and yet free-flow, data can move between them. Massey (2005, p.184) describes spatialised social practices, which are both open and closed as the “sum of our relations and interconnections”. Simply put, the student interactions make space.

Massey (2005) presents the notion of “places-within-places” (p.179). These are relational constructions between which there is a back and forth. The Facebook Group could be conceptualised as a place within a place. The Facebook Group conceptualised in this manner offers multiplicities of identities and actions. The back and forth is between a student’s Facebook News Feed, Friends’ Walls and the Facebook Group News Feed and interaction within. There is back and forth between the life worlds of the academic and the social within the same space and this causes the collapse of easily demarcated identities and environments.

Liminality, transition and space-time

This section brings together the three ideas of transition, becoming (Gale and Parker, 2012) and liminality (Turner, 1967) from the student experience literature I discussed in the previous section of the literature review and relates these to space-time. As I discussed previously, the first year at university is described as “betwixt and between” (Palmer et al, 2009).

In coming to understand time and liminality, I understand the first year as a liminal space-time of becoming a student. I reiterate here again that the use of liminal is not used to mean a rite of passage but more to mean an in-between space or way of being.

Time and Facebook

Literature on time and Facebook is limited so for this section I draw on the work of

Miller (2011). Miller is not a theorist of time but an anthropologist. His writing on time and Facebook is a small part of a much larger ethnographic study of Trinidadians and their use of Facebook. Miller (2011) suggests that Facebook changes our relationship to time. I see Facebook time as linear on the surface, the rolling timed News Feed, which can be viewed into a user's past history and watched as it creates the present. Miller (2011) proposes that one of the impacts of Facebook is that it resurrects contacts with people from a past part of our life, old school friends for example. This "revitalization of the past" (p.191), Miller (2011) contends, means we are less connected with people we see on a daily basis. He suggests Facebook allows users to "reconnect with longer time depth of an individual's prior life" (p.191). In a new undergraduate's life this allows a connection or reconnection with old school friends on a scale that may not have been possible before Facebook. Miller (2011) proposes "Facebook seems to make an orientation to the present more difficult rather than easier" (p.193). On Facebook you can view the past, the present and the future together as a continuous stream. Adam (1995) calls for us to look beyond the clock and calendar time and that is what I do in my analysis of the data (see Chapter 5). I see Facebook as superficially ruled by clock time but I explore what other times and temporal activities take place on and through Facebook. I also explore the narratives of time that the students experience and talk to me about in the interviews I undertook. Using Lemke's (2000) notion of timescales, I explore whether Facebook has its own timescale. In examining this view of social networks, I propose Facebook as an ecosocial system, and ask what are the characteristic timescales of the process and events therein? When this concept is layered over the work of Massey (1992), time possesses multiple dimensions i.e. space-time, not simply across scales (different sizes) but spheres as well.

Time should be understood as more than just clock and calendar time and I take forward that I should attend to the "backcloth" of the "own" times of the Facebook interface on which the "other" times I am studying are constructed. In the first year transition period, old norms are given a chance to be challenged and changed. I explore how students use their "lived, experienced, generated, known, reckoned, allocated, controlled and used" (Adam, 1992, p.35) temporalities in this first year.

A summary of the literature and implications of the literature for this study

The literature discussed covers three areas; technology in HE, the first-year student experience and time and space in HE. By grounding my study in these three subject areas, I draw on a range of theories to explore the role Facebook plays in the lives of transitioning students. In this concluding summary, I draw together the elements that position the study and discuss the gaps in the literature, which this study aims to address. To conclude, I refer back to my research questions to show the link between the literature gap and my direction of inquiry.

The key areas for exploration in this study are:

- Facebook as new technology in HE
- The importance of social support in the first year
- New learned temporal experiences in HE
- When time
- Space-time
- Liminality in HE

The transition to university offers a temporal bounding for the study and by exploring the first year betwixt space (Palmer et al., 2009) and first year experience. The literature presented here shows us that although a range of studies of Facebook and undergraduate students exists, there are limited longitudinal studies or those that explore at a micro level, in depth, the individual experiences and narratives of students' lives. I believe this is an important lens through which to view the actualities of student experience of technology and not focus only on the possibilities.

The use of social media and Facebook are relatively new phenomena in Higher Education but, although this is the case, I believe these technologies should not be fetishised. This study looks at the link between these technologies and student life; the experiences of students and what activities they engage in day to day in the act of "being an authentic student" (Finn, 2013, p94).

Through data analysis, I began to see the importance of time to this study, both within the HE setting and Facebook. As a result of this, I then iteratively responded to the data and began to explore literature on time. The work of Adam (1995) offered me the concept of social analysis of time. I found this a helpful model, which related to the social nature of SNS and my a priori knowledge that Facebook offers social support to new undergraduate students (Wilcox et al., 2009). Adam's (1995) concepts of new,

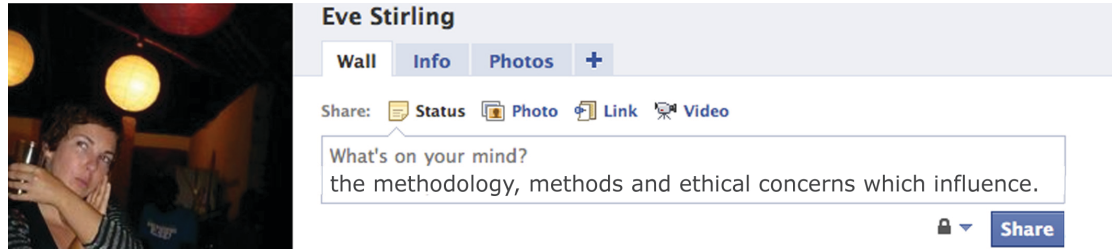
learned temporal experiences and “when time” were two elements that shaped my study design, analysis and presentation of the data.

Another temporal analytical frame that I have found helpful in understanding and conceptualising the experiences of undergraduate students is the idea of liminality, particularly of being inbetween, whether that is inbetween places or experiences. The relationship between Facebook and liminality is explored through the data analysis as I examine Facebook “places-within-places”, if these are liminal spaces and what they offer new undergraduate students. Alongside the notion of time sits Massey’s (1992) concept of space-time. This was helpful in breaking down the online/offline dichotomy. Just as Massey proposed space and time cannot be separated and are intertwined, so are the digital and physical spaces of Facebook. The online/offline does not take place in isolation. There are multiplicities of use across devices and environments. There are different re-conceptions of time that new students have to deal with beyond the structure of time at school. At university there is much unstructured time and this could be seen as one of the challenges of becoming a part of university life (Palmer et al., 2009).

The research questions framing the study (see p.4) were borne out of these key themes. The focus of questions one and two is to explore transition and liminality in the students’ lives. Questions three and four focus on time and the relationship between time and HE and between time and Facebook. Questions four and five have a methodological focus and explore research methods on Facebook and using time as an analytical tool.

The next chapter introduces my ideas on methodology, the methods and the participants involved in this study and ethical concerns relating to these.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY



Research Approaches

Different studies require different research approaches and I understand that it is possible to approach the same research questions with different research methods. The methodological implications of this are grounded in my understanding of knowledge and how I believe I can gain access to knowledge. In this chapter, I present and justify my research approach in understanding how first-year students use Facebook in their transition to university. Chapter 3 is in four sections: Section One discusses methodological decisions and my approach to the study; Section Two presents the pertinent ethical issues and my decisions regarding these through the course of the study; in Section Three I present the study design, which includes the sampling and participants; and in Section Four I conclude by discussing my approach to the analysis and presentation of data.

I acknowledge here that this methodology chapter is a longer one than may ordinarily be found in a PhD thesis. This is because considerations of method formed a substantive part of my investigations. Methodological issues shape two of the five research questions but further to that, the nature of the field of study and my methodological approaches are part of my research focus. This is a new area and so communicating methodological discussions and justifications in the write-up are important to me. (For an overview of method please see table on p.66).

I begin this section by reiterating the context of the study and the research aim and questions guiding it. The next sub-section discusses a range of other studies of student Facebook use, which have influenced my research approach. I then go on to position this study in the research paradigm field. The sub-section that follows discusses key ethnographic terms I see as relevant to this study and I then go on to describe the ethnographic methods I am using to collect data.

Methodology is the critical study and justification of the decisions I have made throughout this research project (Wellington, 2000), from the choice made to study this phenomenon of Facebook, to the research questions I asked, the sample I chose to study, the methods I used to gather data and the way I analysed and presented the data. These decisions were based on my epistemological beliefs, the ways of knowing I used to explore undergraduates' use of Facebook in the first year of university. My methods are presented after the methodological discussions under participants, data analysis and data presentation.

Research questions

The aim of this study is to explore undergraduates' use of Facebook in the first year of university, the relationship between the SNS and what students do at university during their transition year. Using an iterative process throughout the analysis of the data, the themes arising, and literature I subsequently read (as mentioned in the previous chapter) influenced and shaped my research questions.

The research questions that framed my research are as follows:

1. What role does Facebook play in the lives of transitioning students?
2. Can we learn anything new about transition from looking at students' Facebook profiles?
3. Can we learn anything new about students' experiences in HE from considering the role of time in students' lives?
4. How useful is time as an analytical tool when researching Facebook?
5. What are the possibilities and limitations of Facebook as a research site and research tool?

Methodological influences from the literature

I believe technology, and particularly social network sites, have much to offer HEIs and the students studying there. There is much that is unknown, not least the cultural developments in digital life, and in response to these Beer and Burrows (2007) call for a development of *thick descriptive* accounts of the present day use of social network sites *in situ*, as opposed to offering research into the potentials of these software. The "thick description" is a reference from Geertz's (1973) seminal work "An interpretive theory of culture" and I talk about this in more detail below. boyd (2008b) is in

agreement and warns against “idealizing the possibilities...rather than recognizing and working within the actualities of practice” (p.31) to which Selwyn and Grant (2009) and Dutton (2008) also propose further empirical research. Research on Facebook use by undergraduates has up until now focused on the macro or mezzo level, that is the broad overview, survey style of research (Madge et al., 2009; Mazer et al., 2009; Selwyn, 2009), which includes predominately quantitative or thematic qualitative analyses. Gale and Parker (2012) are also in agreement that future research on student transition “needs to foreground students’ lived realities” (p.1). These views were influential to me in focusing this piece of research at the micro level of the individual student experience as little has been undertaken in this area. Researching the micro level actualities of first-year undergraduate Facebook use.

Methods of data collection and sample size justification

The choices I have made in planning my data collection have been influenced by a range of things, which I detail here: existing studies that authors have undertaken on Facebook and more generally studies on young people and undergraduates’ use of technology and the Internet. My set of research questions influenced my data collection as I used the data I gathered to try and answer these questions. The following section reviews the existing literature then goes onto an explanation and justification of my data collection methods and sampling choices and concludes with a list of the data I collected.

Overview of data collection and sample size in other Facebook studies

This section is a review of the current literature from a range of studies looking at students’ Facebook usage. This section details the researchers’ samples and the decisions behind these choices (if discussed in the literature). I conclude by summarising relevant influences for my study.

The majority of current literature on Facebook uses a quantitative or mixed method approach to data collection (Ellison, N. et al., 2007; Hewitt & Forte, 2006; Karpinski, 2009; Madge et al., 2009; Pasek et al., 2009; Pempek et al., 2009; Steinfield et al., 2008, Vie, 2008).

Madge et al.’s (2009) findings were based on a 213 self-selecting sample of first-year undergraduate students, which was 7% of the university’s undergraduate population. The data were gathered through a quantitative online survey but with opportunities for

respondents to elaborate if they desired. The research included no follow up, interviews or focus groups. Mazer et al.'s (2009) study was a quantitative, experimental design using mock-ups of a profile of a real teaching assistant at the university. There were 129 undergraduate student participants. Hewitt & Forte's (2006) findings were based on an online survey of 136 respondents. This is an ongoing project with in-depth interviews to follow. Pempek et al.'s (2009) findings in their study of college students' experiences on Facebook are based on a sample of 92 undergraduates reporting time spent on the site and a survey questioning the activities undertaken whilst there. Vie's (2008) study uses the responses from 127 instructors and 354 students who completed an online survey of questions about their MySpace or Facebook usage. She then undertook two, one hour, follow up face-to-face interviews with ten instructors and ten students. Sturgeon & Walker's (2009) data was collected from both students and faculty via an email link to an online Google Docs questionnaire. All faculty staff and a "large" (p.3) undisclosed number of students were sent the link and the link was also posted on Facebook and passed on virally. There were 146 respondents, 72 staff and 74 students (it is worth bearing in mind there was a FTE of 4100 students at the college at the time).

Qualitative and longitudinal studies are nascent but growing in popularity. Selwyn's (2007/9) findings are based on a qualitative study of 909 undergraduate students' education-related use of Facebook at a UK university. The study was a "non-participant ethnography study" (2007, p.7) where he followed a Facebook Group as a non-participant member. He monitored Wall postings and analysed the type of discourse that occurred. Raynes-Goldie (2010) undertook a year-long ethnographic study of a group of connected 20-something Facebook users in Toronto, Canada, both online and offline. West and colleagues' (2009) study focused on students Facebook Friends and particularly looks at those with older adults as Friends. Their sample of 16 students was recruited through a "purposive snowballing" (p.619) approach, which only targeted undergraduate students living in London who were active Facebook users. The students were second or third-year undergraduates.

boyd & Hargittai (2010) used a longitudinal paper-pencil survey at two points over two academic years, to collect data from first-year students at the University of Illinois, Chicago (UIC), USA. They had 1610 responses. They used paper over a web-based survey so as "not to bias against students who are online less frequently" (p.7). This issue is pertinent to my study as I realise that by using an online method of data collection I will bias against some of the participants. My aim for the ethnography was

to work with students who were heavy/frequent Facebook users.

The majority of the studies carried out to date have been based on general student Facebook usage at university network level, the mezzo level of institution or faculty. There are few that look at the micro level of class, group or individual, or that gain any “deep” understanding of students’ experiences of using Facebook beyond survey feedback data. Newer studies (Raynes-Goldie, 2010) are beginning to focus on the opinions and experiences of users.

Other studies of note and influence

There are some other relevant studies of undergraduates’ use of the Internet and technology more generally, which are of interest to my sampling choices (Ipsos Mori 2008; Quan-Haase & Collins, 2008; Selwyn, 2008). Selwyn (2008) used a stratified sample of 1222 undergraduate university students who responded to a two-page questionnaire. He believed the sample was skewed towards students with strong educational backgrounds but was generally representative of the overall UK student population in terms of gender and ethnic background (p.15). Quan-Haase & Collins (2008) used an online survey, which included general demographic information of participants. They got 293 respondents. Participants were recruited through posters across the campus. It is worth noting that they state: “while the lack of randomness in sample selection could introduce a bias in the results, the intent of the study was to elicit rich descriptions” (p.531). They followed up the survey with five face-to-face unstructured focus groups of 21 participants and then 14 face-to-face structured interviews after that, based on focus group responses. The approach of a mix of online survey and face-to-face has influenced my study.

The Ipsos Mori (2008) data is based on online interviews with 1,111 participants. “The online survey was designed to compare previous expectations with actual experiences at university” (p.3). A note of caution, which I need to take on board for my study, is as stated; “...the survey is online and optional means that any respondents who are interested enough to reply are already receptive to a certain amount of technology” (p.3). This survey was followed by four different online focus groups consisting of between 5 and 8 respondents. These were “not intended to be representative of students” (p.3) but to provide in-depth commentary on their experiences. This is what I looked for in my ethnography focus groups and interviews.

These previous studies on Facebook use have influenced my research approach and for the most part have encouraged my interpretivist view of reality. I find it troublesome

to engage with lab-based studies whereby Facebook use is measured against an experimental profile (such as Mazer et al., 2009). The use of self-reporting via a questionnaire alone can also be limiting. Although a large sample can be targeted, the data gathered is of a shallow nature and the self-reporting could be interpreted as questionable. The studies, which explore users' experiences through ethnographic methods and interviews, often have smaller sample sizes but offer a deeper level of rich qualitative data to draw upon. I have always been interested in speaking to users about their experiences and perceptions of using the site and I believe my research approach achieved this.

Research paradigms - A mixed method approach

Janesick (2003) compares qualitative research design to that of dance choreography, as she says "a good choreographer refuses to be limited to just one approach or one technique" (p.49). Not being limited to one approach or technique offers me the ability to be creative and experimental in my approach but I understand I must ground my study within an ontological paradigm. The research paradigm is a basic set of beliefs, which guides a researcher's actions (Guba, 1990). My beliefs are firmly rooted in the constructivist school of thought (Creswell, 2012), I am not searching for the truth or trying to prove one dominant view. I am interested in the phenomenon being studied and coming to understand how people experience Facebook use at university through a range of means.

This study is a mixed method study that is predominantly ethnographic in nature but also draws on numerical data. My approach has been iterative and interpretative, responding to the research sites, participants and literature I have read (Creswell, 2012). Moving on from the studies presented previously, I hoped that by using a mixed-method approach I would build on these and I believe that micro level research can give us a deep view of an experience of a few people. When this is complimented with a larger sample of data from a large-scale questionnaire, this approach offers what Richardson (1998) describes as "crystallization". The many views through a crystal offer differing views of the research phenomenon. She proposes, "there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves" (p.358). In this way, we see how a mixed method approach can offer different views of the same and I present these in the "Facebook Landscape" section in Chapter 4 (p.104).

The influence of practice-based research

Practice-based research is the dominant research approach in Art and Design and could be said to draw upon other research disciplines; anthropological, historical and from the social sciences. The difference being that the research is undertaken to inform practical creative work and is often for a specific client (Trowler, 2013). Practice-based research has been an influence on my work and this influence can be traced back to my training as a Product Designer at university. Research is linked to creating a product. There is a plurality of method, which can be playful, unpredictable and develop organically (Trowler, 2013). It is this plurality of method that has been most influential to my research approach within this study and I have drawn upon many of my skill sets as a designer to help me think about and understand Facebook use. For example, I made a scale card, architectural model of my Facebook profile (see fig.7, over the page) to help me understand Facebook as a space. Unfortunately there is not room in this thesis to discuss this particular method in detail but I plan to write about that approach elsewhere.



Fig.7 Facebook, an auto-ethnographic card model – not to scale.

In interpreting this model I was influenced by the work of Cathy Ganoe (1999, p.4) who suggests:

Interpreting interior space as a narrative adds depth and breadth to the understanding of how environment is psychologically inhabited by the individual.

In the future, I would be interested in exploring concepts of the spatial narratives of Facebook in further models, both in card and as full-size installations that could be explored through walking around and within to inhabit a physical Facebook.

Trowler (2013) proposes that Art and Design research has much to offer those working in HE research, particularly from the “user-centred” approaches seen in product design research. This approach is one where the user is placed at the centre of the research and design process and this collaborative approach can often lead to unexpected insights that the designer may not have come up with working on their own (van Eijk et al., 2012).

I have also been influenced by practice-based designer/researchers in interior design (Danko & Meneely, 2006), who draw on narrative methodologies to understand human interactions and the interrelated nature of peoples’ stories and the influence these can have on the design process when designing new spatial experiences. They suggest that:

Narrative, like design, is context dependent. Both are a creative outgrowth of the details and situational events that characterize a particular time and place. Narrative, like design, is socially entwined, focusing on the potential points of tension related to various human activities while attempting to deepen our understanding of human nature (p.12).

This link between design thinking and narrative has influenced my approach to creating, ordering and presenting the data in this thesis and I discuss this in more detail in the later sections after I introduce my ethnographic approach to researching the realities of Facebook use.

Ethnography

This section presents some of the key terms and issues relevant to ethnographies. I begin this section by asking what an ethnography is, or rather what ethnographic methods are. I then go on to discuss the tensions related to ethnographies of the Internet and present a “connective” ethnographic approach, which is linked across digital and physical sites. I then move the discussion to the methods of ethnographic data collection, particularly focusing on the terms ‘field’, ‘site’ and ‘participant observation’, which when used to describe ethnographies of digital spaces can sometimes be seen as confusing. I then detail some broader issues relating writing ethnographic thick description and end with some thoughts about myself as an “insider” user of Facebook, being a reflexive researcher and the impact these have on writing ethnographically.

What is (an) ethnography?

Hammersley & Atkinson (1983) suggest ethnography draws on a wide range of sources of information collected over a period of time from the participant's everyday life.

The ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions, in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned (p.2).

In their updated version (2007), they elaborate further to describe the "fuzzy semantic boundaries" (p.1) which now exist in relation to the definition of the approach of ethnography. Historically, the term has been intrinsically linked and is at the core of Western anthropology (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) but over time it has been appropriated by a variety of disciplines and this has led to the fuzzy boundaries around the use of the term. Hammersley & Atkinson propose that "ethnography plays a complex and shifting role in the dynamic tapestry" (p.2) of the social sciences in the twenty-first century. Ethnography is about "making sense of the world in everyday life" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p.2). For me, this simple description, the making sense of everyday life, is key to understanding the relevance of ethnography to my research approach.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) suggest that ethnographies "cannot be programmed" and the practice of researching ethnographically is full of the "unexpected" (p.28). In that sense, when one talks of method it can be complicated to pin down exactly what the ethnography may entail. That basic, simplest method is having access to the subject of study, in this case, undergraduate students and their Facebook profile and observing and writing field notes about what they do in "everyday life". Field notes, being the traditional form of recording the researcher's observations, describe the field of study and what I as the researcher see as important to document (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

What are the key differences of ethnographies of the Internet?

Ethnographies of the Internet and ethnographic practice in online spaces have a rich history (see Boellstorff, 2008; Dibbell, 1994; Miller, 2000; Thomas, 2004; Turkle, 1995). Historically, ethnography was a term used to describe the anthropological study of the "other" culture, which took place overseas in a land very different from the home land

inhabited by the ethnographer (Geertz, 1973; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Wolf, 1992). Over the last fifteen years, there have been an increasing number of scholars undertaking ethnographies of the Internet, the online and digital spaces, from Judith Donath in 1999, looking at the notion of 'virtual community' to Daniel Miller in 2011 with his *Tales of Facebook*. There have been many discussions around whether digital practices are seen as real interactions as opposed to virtual ones. The general consensus today is one of an understanding that digital spaces are as real as the physical spaces we inhabit and that viewing the two together can offer researchers much insight into the everyday lives of the participants we study. The use of the terms virtual ethnography and online ethnography are still in use within the research community but I find them problematic. The use of the terms online/offline to describe behaviours and practices is particularly troublesome. The idea that one can be "offline" if you have a Facebook account, implies the Facebook profile lies dormant when you are not interacting with it. This is far from the case, as your Friends will post on your Wall and interact on your profile whether you are reading your Facebook at that time or not. While in this case I find the terms problematic, it is possible you will see them used to describe ethnographies that only use data from digital, "online" spaces as compared with other ethnographies, which involve only physical presence with participants.

To move the discussion back to this research project, there exists a tension around the view of websites as field sites. Robinson & Schulz (2009) suggest that the continual evolution of the Internet "necessitates continual reassessment of fieldwork methods" (p.692) and for researchers to be collaborators and producers of content in the field site being studied. This relates to the researcher taking part in the practices of the site, which is something I am heavily involved in on Facebook. Another key point is that of the dichotomy portrayed of online versus offline. I agree with Robinson & Schulz (2009), who propose that "it is often inappropriate to examine online communication in isolation because face-to-face and mediated interaction do not take place in dichotomous realms that obey totally different logics" (p.692). Robinson & Schultz describe examples of such connected ethnographies as exploring mediated technologies alongside face-to-face or "real life". Even in these descriptions, I see this as continuing the dichotomy they say is inappropriate. The terms I have come to use over the course of this study are "digital", to describe Facebook, and "physical", to describe the concrete and face-to-face.

I believe that as our experience of using the Internet develops and social network sites, Internet culture and practices become more commonplace, our perception of the "real"

is changing. As boyd (2008b) explains, “the Internet is increasingly entwined in peoples’ lives; it is both an imagined space and an architectural place” (p.26). So to describe it as unreal or virtual is misleading.

Facebook in Everyday Life

In researching both the digital and the physical environments of the undergraduate students, I have taken the approach that there is nothing particularly new or special in researching ‘Facebook’ as a digital environment but that it is the cultural practices within it which are the focus of my ethnographic observation. As boyd states, (2008a, p.31) “Internet ethnography is not about the technology - it is about the people, their practices and the cultures they form”. The people, their habits and rituals are what interest me, along with their interplay with technology. The Internet is a pathway to connections with other people or information and I see Facebook as a pathway and a destination, one that the students use on a daily basis as part of their everyday lives. When studying something that can be transient and fluid, the concept of a field site becomes fuzzy and less rigid. The importance of being embedded in the practices of the participants in order to have an insider view is paramount in understanding this. This is nothing new in ethnographic terms, as Geertz (1973) discusses in his seminal work, the researcher is embedded in the culture of the research subject. The importance of sticking to ethnographic traditions is echoed by Beer & Burrows (2007, 1.1) who suggest that taking time to create the “thick description” of “emergent digital phenomena” to enable researchers to understand “the basic parameters of our new digital objects” before we can analyse and locate these within broader theoretical frameworks. In studying the cultural practices of a group, boyd (2008a, p.29) suggests “questions are important because they provide guidelines for observation, but researchers must be prepared for observations and data to reveal new questions. Be bound by culture, not by questions”. In this project, the cultural practices are of first-year undergraduate students using Facebook.

Another influence was my MA study for which I based my data collection only on Facebook. After working solely in the digital, I realised that my understanding of being ‘on’ Facebook had developed. I had an understanding (from the preliminary study) that Facebook was embedded in the lives of the student users I was interested in learning about. The second study took a broader approach and looked beyond learning and teaching use of Facebook to focus on its role in the university experience. A “connective” approach was used in a multi-sited study where attention was given to

both the digital and physical environments the students inhabit.

In studying the “real” world of HE and the cultural practices of students I believe a connective approach, which follows the participants through their various digital and physical environments, offers the researcher the most scope, even if the main focus of the research questions is digitally based. This approach is now discussed in more detail.

On understanding digital and physical – A Connective Ethnographic Approach

The term connective ethnography has been used by Hine, (2000); Fields & Kafai, (2009); Leander & McKim, (2003) to describe ethnographic studies in which the field sites span both digital and physical spaces. Leander & McKim (2003, p.238) describe how participants are “in and travel across more than one space at one time” and so therefore we as researchers should pay attention to these multiplicities by tracing the flows of their movement between and across the physical and the digital environments and the intersections therein (Leander & McKim, 2003). Field & Kafai (2009, p.47) undertook a connective ethnography and traced the “knowledge sharing” in a virtual world by gamers across space and time. Hine (2000, p.61) describes this approach as “tracing connections rather than about location in a singular bounded site”. In studying students’ Facebook use, I have observed that they very rarely operate in a single domain, space, or site, digital or physical. They access Facebook from their smart phone on the way to lectures or they chat to classmates on Facebook Chat on their laptops while sitting next to them in a lecture. This duality of spatial use is a common and an important theme when exploring Facebook use in HE. By paying attention ethnographically to the wider sphere, beyond the digital space, the multiplicity of the cultural practices taking place can be explored.

In this project, a multi-sited, connective, ethnographic approach allowed for observation both on Facebook and face-to-face to go beyond the online/offline dichotomy, which can sometimes exist when researching SNS. This explores the complex relationship of the embedded and ubiquitous nature of Facebook in a sample of undergraduates’ lives. In a connective ethnography there is a blurring of the boundaries of digital and concrete spaces. A connective ethnography describes the use of two or more field sites and describes the connection found between them.

Can you have an insider perspective?

If a researcher is a member of the site and community they are studying, and therefore it is part of their daily practice and culturally anchored in their actions and interactions, this means they have access to insider knowledge of the site and some of its cultural practices, as they are involved with them. Lankshear and Knobel (2003) stress the importance of insider research, particularly in new media settings, due to the fast-paced changes that take place and the knowledge needed to analyse and comment effectively upon them. Merriam et al. (2001) offer another viewpoint that “what an insider ‘sees’ and ‘understands’ will be different from, but as valid as, what an outsider understands” (p.415). They also propose that even as an insider there is scope and possibility for me to be an outsider and that everything is relative to my own and the participants’ values and expectations (Merriam et al., 2001). Therefore, reflecting on my biases is both useful and ethically important (Markham, 2005), as being very close to the cultural practices of the site could mean I do not question these sufficiently. Being involved with new technologies as vernacular practices lessens the extent to which I see them as exotic or “new” but still, Facebook has numerous cultural practices, many of which I am not aware. Any understanding of cultural practices is influenced both by the researcher’s own experiences as much as the frame of the context of the research study (Goffman, 1959). These frames of reference are situated in the researcher’s own practices, alongside the frames of reference of the participants.

Being ethnographic makes sense of the “complexities of social life” (Sikes, 2000, p.286). Being ethnographic in making sense of the messy realities of student Facebook use is important to me, as I see it as a method that allows for an insight into the culture of the participants. It allows for many methods but this does come with its own issues, such as making sense of the mass of data! I propose that there needs to be “heterogeneity and variation” (Law, 2004, p.6) in my data collection to respond to the heterogeneity and variation in the student participants and the fluidity of a digital life.

I now move the discussion to key terms for using an ethnographic approach and highlight some nuances which I see as being different when undertaking an ethnography in digital spaces; field site, participant observation and field notes.

What is the field site?

Bailey (2007, p.2) describes field research as “the systematic study, primarily through long-term, face-to-face interactions and observations, of everyday life”. These

observations of everyday life, in “everyday contexts” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.3) are “increasingly technologically mediated” (Murthy, 2008, p.849), thus meaning that our understanding of the “field site” can be problematic, as authors in the field have discussed (boyd, 2007, 2008; Hine, 2000; Kozinets, 2010). boyd (2008, p.26) explains that “the internet is increasingly entwined in peoples lives” and that both mediated and unmediated spaces need to be explored. Whereas Kozinets (2010, p.63) makes the distinction between researching “online communities”, those that are communities, having elements that cross into the physical, and “communities online”, those that are solely based in the digital, and that different approaches can be taken to explore each. Hine (2000) proposes that an ethnography can only be authentic when it includes elements of face-to-face *and* online.

Gaining access to the field

I requested that the participants added me as a Friend on Facebook. They did this by searching for my name and clicking ‘add friend’. I did this so that the participants had agency over taking part in the study. They did not have to add me if they decided not to take part and they could delete me from their Friend list whenever they wished. I was not controlling the access to their Profile. Although Facebook and the Profiles of the six participants’ were the main focus of the study, I began by meeting the participants face-to-face. Since the first study, I had an interest in the broader relationship between students, Facebook and the university context, and to explore this in more detail I wanted to spend face-to-face time with the students within the university environment. In this study, the field site was the student and their interactions within the digital and concrete university environment. I followed their movements across the digital and concrete spaces through collecting photographs of their spaces, screenshots and downloads of their Facebook Profile and face-to-face interviews. I explored connections between the field sites as opposed to the understanding of one site, not to ask “What is Facebook?” But “When?”, “Where?” And “How is Facebook?” (Hine, 2000). When is Facebook used by the students? Where are the environments in which Facebook is used? How does Facebook fit within the university experience?

The field site introduced here is discussed in more detail in the ethics section.

Participant observation

Participant observation is the key method of ethnographic research, which differentiates it from other qualitative practices (Boellstorff et al, 2012; Delamont, 2004; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Observation of the participants is undertaken in their

everyday setting of the field site (as discussed in the previous section) and the aim is to understand the cultural practices of those being studied by living alongside them, taking part when appropriate and talking to them about their lives and actions (Delamont, 2004). Boellstorff et al. (2012, p.66) suggest that participant observation “entails a particular kind of joining in and a particular way of looking at things that depends on the research question, field site, and practical constraints”. The concept of “joining in” when studying Facebook is discussed.

Accessing the everyday of Facebook, for me as a researcher, involved sitting in front of my computer and observing and taking part in the day-to-day lives of the participants’ on Facebook. As Boellstorff et al. (2012) suggest, one must prepare oneself technologically and physically before entering the field. A researcher must have the appropriate equipment to be able to access the field site. They write in relation to studying virtual worlds but this advice is equally applicable to researchers who study social media sites. If a researcher does not have good Internet access and an understanding of how the site works, studying it is challenging. I used a laptop computer and based myself in my own home for the solely digital study and also increasingly used my smart phone to access Facebook when out and about as the study progressed. I also moved to locations beyond my own home with both my laptop and smart phone. I visited the physical spaces my participants visited: the student’s union, their halls of residence cafe and the university library, to name a few.

Field notes

Field notes are a key element of recording ethnographic observations, much is written on this subject elsewhere (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Sanjek, 1990; Wolf, 1992). The focus here is to describe the practice of writing field notes when in the field site of Facebook. As discussed earlier, Facebook operates both synchronously and asynchronously. As a result, depending on the practice I was involved in, I was able to write field notes as I was observing. This is a practice, which is not so easily undertaken in the physical world due to the disconnection from the activity being observed (Boellstorff et al., 2012). The writing of field notes when observing Facebook means that notes can be written as one is experiencing the cultural practice. The use of digital screenshots to record what I was seeing in a multimodal manner is helpful and can supplement traditional field notes. The sorts of digital screenshots I took might be of a participant’s comment on a Status update or Photo for example and may typify a cultural practice, such as ‘Tagging’ (highlighting their face and name) a Friend in a post or ‘Checking in’ (highlighting on a digital map) to a particular physical space within

the university. The visual nature of these notes offers a richer view of the practice than written notes alone. These shots can also be used at a later time to work up to fuller written notes. Boellstorff et al. (2012, p.83) compare these to “scratch notes” (Sanjeck, 1990), but I see these as also being key pieces of visual data, which may be used as part of the presentation of the study to illustrate a certain practice. This digital nature of recording my field notes was used alongside the more traditional note taking on paper when I was away from my computer. Richardson (1998) proposes that writing is a method of inquiry and she offers a writing aid for ethnographic field notes that I used to structure my own: she defines four categories for writing up field notes; observation notes, theoretical notes, methodological notes and personal notes (Richardson, 1998, p.941). My involvement and experience of participant observation, and the field notes that I took of these experiences, culminate together to create the ethnographic texts.

What is thick Sociological description?

In writing ethnographically, my aim was to produce, as I mentioned earlier, “thick description” in the traditional sociological style (Beer & Burrows, 2007; Geertz, 1973). Beer & Burrows (2007) suggest taking time to create the “thick description” of “emergent digital phenomena” is important to enable researchers to understand “the basic parameters of our new digital objects” (para. 1.1) before we can analyse and locate these within broader theoretical frameworks. Selwyn & Grant (2009) propose that this manifests itself as a range of descriptive questions, which we need to ask of the people who experience the culture. What are people doing, and equally not doing? What are the results, expected and unexpected of these cultural practices? In working with my participants, asking them what they were doing on and with Facebook, I realised they were telling me stories of their Facebook use and that, in using these to develop the thick description of the cultural practices I was experiencing, I was influenced by scholars in the field of narrative inquiry (Chase, 2008 & Creswell, 2012). I see there being a link between narrative inquiry and ethnographic practice. There are many ethnographies of the Internet but I draw on one author, Tom Boellstorff (2008), who wrote an ethnography of Second Life for his advice on the importance of using “the ethnographic monograph” (p.238). My aim was, as Boellstorff (2008) describes, to gain a “holistic understanding of the constitutive intersectionality of cultural domains” (p.241). That is, to understand how student culture and Facebook culture intersect and how these cultures influence one another. The use of narratives to analyse and present the data supported this and this is discussed later in this chapter in the analysis of data section.

Clifford and Marcus (1986) suggest that “even the best ethnographic texts—serious, true fictions—are systems, or economies, of truth. Power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control” (p.7). The truths are relational and contextual and situational. Rabinow (1986) discusses the making of ethnographic texts. The stories are not “truths”, they are representations of my interpretations of the lives of my FbF, but Rabinow (1986) suggests that my representations are “modern social facts” (p.261), and that these are shaped by many influences, including the histories of ethnographic monographs which have gone before and the power relationships that exist in relation to the politics of representation. This is something about which I will need to be reflexive, in relation to my presentation and re-presentation of the stories. I discuss this in more detail in the data presentation section, later in this chapter.

Reflexivity and being reflexive

Reflexivity is a central part of any research involving interactions with participants, but especially in this case, where decisions were made about Facebook profiles. Research is not value free and to be reflexive is to be aware of your analytical approach to the study and how this may influence your behaviour in the field and to acknowledge this throughout, particularly in the write-up (Greenbank, 2003). The aim is to be authentic within and about the culture being studied. The choice to study a broad question from the outset, “how do undergraduate students use Facebook?”, was influenced by the work of boyd (2008a, p.29) wherein she suggests, “deep hanging out” before “early analysis provokes new questions”. The ability to approach this original element of hanging out with a reflexive lens, I believe, aided the understanding of the practices being studied. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest taking a reflexive approach in which I understand that this research and my research practices are part of the world being studied. I am making sense of Facebook practices through my own use of Facebook, both personally and as a research tool. To support my reflexive approach I found it helpful to record “critical incidences”, which I found to be important at various intervals throughout the study.

I recorded “critical incidences” or moments of interest on Facebook through taking a screen shot of the Facebook page I was on. The concept of “critical incidences” relates to the work of David Tripp (1998) and the process of reflexivity. Through this process, the researcher not only develops understandings about the data, but also examines the

ways in which these developing understandings influence the researcher. A "critical incident" defines the point at which these understandings come together and a new understanding is created, which influences the research project and researcher, thus effecting change in some way. To come to this level of deeper understanding, my critical incidence screenshots were reviewed on a monthly basis and reflexive field notes were written alongside. By using this notion of critical incidences I was able to acknowledge my key moments of understanding. These then formed a major part of my analysis and decisions about which key pieces of data made it into each of my student narratives.

Ethics

Buchanan (2010) suggests that there are many dimensions of “ethical complexity” (p.93) in researching digital spaces. This section discusses these complexities and also covers issues of researching ethnographically in a multi-sited environment, gaining consent from participants and the university ethics procedure.

To date there has been little specific writing on researching ethically on Facebook so I draw on literature that examines the methods and ethics of social research on the Internet more generally.

What does it mean to research ethically in digital spaces?

The Association of Internet Researchers (AOIR) has significantly influenced me in my work researching Facebook. The AOIR has a code of ethics 2.0 (Markham & Buchanan, 2012) regarding ethical decision-making and Internet research. This aims to give guidelines to researchers researching on and of the Internet. When I started this research, the original code (2002) was in place and this was a key influence when planning the study. I draw on both sets of guidelines in this chapter.

The recent ESRC Framework for Research Ethics (FRE) (2010) is a new review of guidelines for researchers proposing ESRC funded projects. One of the key content changes from the 2005 guidelines is that all Internet research will receive a full ethics review. This is due to research on the Internet posing “new ethics dilemmas” (p.32). These dilemmas are the things that troubled me while planning this study, such questions as; what constitutes “privacy” in a digital environment?; and when is deception or covert observation justifiable? I discuss these dilemmas in this section and draw upon other researchers’ experiences to support my research choices.

Buchanan (2010) suggests that researchers on the Internet should consider “the ethics of the methodological choices as well as the ethics of research questions and/or problems in determining how we evaluate and respond to the myriad of ethical issues in online research” (p.93). In planning this study, ethical concerns have been at the forefront of my mind. Choosing an ethnographic approach as opposed to a quantitative survey-based approach has meant that I had to fully consider the impact of my presence and interactions on Facebook. Ess (2007) suggests that we question in the first instance whether researching the participants online is “preferable to offline research, precisely for ethical reasons” (p.492). For this research project, researching

the “online” (digital) site was integral to the project. I believed by researching on Facebook I would have access to information about how the students negotiate the university experience that I could not gain by way of a face-to-face ethnography alone. Buchanan (2010) proposes online and offline are now so interconnected that we should view them as “a fluid sphere” (p.89) but she contends that this then “blurs the research boundaries” and also as a result the ethical issues relating to this.

I now move my discussion to the university ethics procedure and the process I went through to gain informed consent from the participants to take part in the study.

The university ethics procedure aims to ensure researchers working within the university jurisdiction carry out research with honesty, integrity, minimal risk to participants and that it is culturally sensitive (University of Sheffield, 2010). The participant should, the policy states, have the right to consent or withdraw from the research, be assured of confidentiality, security of their data and the safety of themselves (ibid). The ethics process is based in the academic department and involves a submission system of the proposed research project, which is then reviewed by a panel of three members of the academic staff within the department. This study has been approved by the university ethics approval system (see Appendix 2.0).

In response to the examples of ethical guidelines and procedures I have discussed here, I propose I was an ethically aware, self-reflective researcher (University of Sheffield, 2010). I understand that every research project is not without risk and as the UoS (2010) states “an ethical approach...involves...proper recognition of, and preparation for, risks, and their responsible management” (p.1). I detail my thoughts relating to these issues and this specific research project here.

My approach was to respect the data at all times. For example, I did not leave a participant’s Facebook Profile open unsupervised on my computer. There was a risk that the participants may leave their account unattended, which may have caused distress to the participants if seen by others. To address this, in the first face-to-face meeting with the participants, I discussed research ethics and Facebook in the focus group. The aim of this was to explain to the participants what I was interested in looking at in their Profile and whether the participants would be happy for me to share any of this information in academic papers. I explained that ideally I would like to be able to quote their Status updates and Wall postings verbatim and I discussed the possibility of this with the participants. I was also aware that this may have impacted on

what they chose to Post and furthermore on their anonymity, which I discuss this later in this section. All my participants said they understood this and were in agreement that it was acceptable. I saw this as a two-way process in which I shared my intentions for the data with my participants.

Gaining informed consent in studies on the Internet can be complicated, but in this case informed consent was gained from each of the participants of the ethnography only. This was obtained after the face-to-face meeting took place once the participant had agreed to take part in the research and asked to be my Friend on Facebook. I had them sign the consent form after they had met with me face-to-face and read the information sheet. The consent form included questions about use of images, and screenshots from Facebook and archiving data. This was to ensure any data I had access to and wished to include now or in the future in the study was covered. Lawson (2004) calls informed consent “negotiable” (p.82) and Buchanan (2010) agrees, suggesting “ethical pluralism” (p.89), which responds to the research aim and questions depending on the sensitivity of the topic (see also Markham, 1998, p. 2005). I also agree that informed consent is temporal as this is a discursive process.

I believe research questions and methods could be seen as sensitive in nature and some participants may have private or sensitive data on their Facebook Profile. I looked at my participants’ lives in detail, in what are very much their spaces, and while they invited me into them, I would not presume that they will always be happy with me being there. I need to be aware that the participants may change their minds on letting me use their data in the future. At the moment they are signing to allow me to use data that has yet to be produced. The participants could delete me as a Friend on Facebook at anytime to withdraw from the study. This did happen in the case of Tomas, but he did not delete me specifically, he deleted his whole Facebook account. He decided to “take a break”, as he explained me in later communication.

In aiming to write “thick descriptions” of my participants, Lawson (2004) suggests that doing this “increases the threat to their anonymity” (p.85) due to the searchable nature of the Internet and the vast range of privacy settings on Facebook, which may or may not be used. This has the potential to make the participants very easily traceable. My decision to use verbatim quotes of my FbF Status updates means that they could be easily traceable. Throughout the study and at present all my FbF have their Facebook Profiles set to private so this traceability is non-existent. I have tried copying a number of their Status updates into the search engine Google and I cannot see their Profiles as

a search result. The AOIR (Markham & Buchanan, 2012) asks whether the dissemination of findings protects confidentiality and whether the future risk of this is safeguarded. In response to this, I offered my FbF the opportunity to choose a pseudonym by which they would be known in my thesis and associated research publications and presentations. All wished me to use their first name. This posed an ethical problem for me, as I believe in taking my research participants' wishes seriously. In light of the AOIR (Markham & Buchanan, 2012) guidelines and the University code on anonymity, I made the decision to change all names and place names to ensure any future risk was safeguarded. As Ess (2007) suggests, researchers "have to make difficult judgments regarding the tension between protecting anonymity, gaining informed consent, etc, and the...requirements of their particular methodology" (p.498). For me, as I stated earlier, the process was iterative and in choosing to use participant-observation, this heightened the importance of attending to ethical issues and the use of the large amount of, in some cases very personal, data. I believe that I have acted ethically throughout this project and treated all my participants and their data with the respect they deserve.

AOIR (2002) asks, do participants in this environment assume or believe that their communication is private (AOIR, 2002, p.5)? Privacy concerns are a keenly debated topic in Internet research, particularly among people who have not spent much time in the field of the Internet. The privacy of my participants was always important to me and throughout the study I came to understand that all of my FbF had set their Facebook accounts so that only people who were their Friends could access them. Their data were private and thus I treated anything I read on Facebook in the same manner as if it had been told to me in an interview.

As a researcher of Facebook, a decision had to be made regarding whether to use my own Facebook Profile or set up a different 'researcher' profile. I decided from the outset to use my own Profile. I had the expectation that my participants would let me see their Profiles so I felt it was only just for them to see mine. Using my full Profile has influenced and developed my understanding of my participants' Facebook practices. Ethically I have been mindful of the types of data my participants have access to through my Facebook Profile. I did have concerns regarding my own privacy and anonymity in using my Facebook Profile to collect data: these included the viewing of my own and my Friends' personal data through my Facebook Profile and my personal interactions showing up on the participants' News Feed. Facebook allows the viewing of "Friends of Friends" Profiles and pictures unless otherwise restricted. For example,

this could mean the exposure of my Friends' faces in photographs linked through my Profile page. It was possible for me to set my Profile to "limited" so the participants could only see some of it, which protected mine and my Friends' data. I explained the reasoning behind this in the first face-to-face meeting with the students, using the opportunity as a discussion and educational focus group to ensure all parties were happy with the research parameters. I have made changes to the privacy settings of my Profile, reflexively, particularly with reference to the photographs that my participants could see. For example, I changed the privacy settings so that my participants could not see photos of my Friends' children. In the main, my Profile looks as it would to any of my Friends.

The reasons for this are illustrated in a case which Buchanan (2010) discusses, "rape in cyberspace" (see Dibbell, 1994 for full case details), where an online participant was a victim of a "virtual assault" (p.89) in a virtual world called "Lambda Moo". She uses this example to explain that the "emotion, harms, victimization and harassment" (p.89) are equally experienced in an online environment as offline. This links to my previous discussions about seeing Facebook as a "real" space where, for the most part, social practices and emotions are not separated. This example is an extreme case, but a similar practice on Facebook is "Facebook rape" or "Frape". This practice involves a user leaving their Profile page logged in and then leaving the computer, perhaps having viewed it on a friend's machine or leaving their own computer unattended. A friend then updates that other person's Status update (most commonly) or Profile page with inappropriate data, primarily to cause amusement. The relevance of this to ethics in research is the fact that people do leave their Profiles logged on and this could pose a problem for me in that the participant may leave themselves open to their anonymity in the research process being compromised.

The problems of leaving the 'Facebook field'

When using a student's Facebook Profile as one of the field sites of a connective ethnography, there are a number of reasons why leaving the field can be problematic. In a classic ethnography, which is bounded solely by a school or a university, leaving the field can be as simple as not visiting the buildings on campus and the participants therein. When the participant has been followed onto Facebook, this can become a little more complex. The 'Friend' arrangement of Facebook means that there are a couple of different ways I could go about ending the ethnographic observation of my participants. The participants can simply be deleted from my list of Friends, meaning

that I cannot see their Profile, their Status updates do not show up on my News Feed anymore and I can no longer contact them except via personal Message. To some this may seem the simple solution, but to leave the field in this manner can sever all contact with the participant. Within a temporally bounded study, no further data would be sought from the research participant. However, in understanding the wider practices of the site, membership would still be appropriate. Changes in site interface (which frequently happen on Facebook) can impact on the researcher's frame of analysis.

The other option (and the one I decided to choose) was to keep my Facebook Friends, but to dismiss their interactions from my News Feed. This means I do not have day-to-day updates from them, but can contact them if I need to. Keeping the participants on my Friend list brings ethical responsibilities with it. The students are free to delete me as a Friend but thus far no one has and I have the first study participants in my Facebook News Feed, even though the students have left university now. My reasons for keeping in touch in this manner were that Facebook was the preferred method of contact by the students.

A note on Copyright

Within the scope of this thesis, to address the issue of copyright is an important one. The AOIR (Markham & Buchanan, 2012) ask researchers to consider whether research materials are subject to copyright:

Many countries have strong restrictions on using screenshots or images taken from the web without permission and certain sites have restrictions in their terms of service (Markham & Buchanan, 2012).

Widrick (2011) suggests that "screenshots with personally identifiable information (including photos, names, etc. of actual users) require written consent from the individual(s) before they can be published" and I have gained this through the informed consent process.

I begin this section with a disclaimer: It is very challenging to get a straight answer from Facebook Help pages and their Asset and Logo guidelines with regard to using Facebook "assets" for research publication purposes. All the information is aimed at business use. In light of this, I have worked within the parameters available and used the Facebook asset (Facebook, 2013) and AOIR (Markham & Buchanan, 2012)

guidelines.

Within this written presentation of the study, the use of screenshots has been limited to my own Facebook Profile. The Facebook assets and logo guidelines give a written definition of each of the sections of a Facebook Profile; Timeline, Messages, News Feed (see appendix for full definition list) and suggest that "the Facebook brand includes the words, phrases, symbols and designs that are associated with Facebook and the services Facebook provides" (Facebook, 2013). They also require that the term Facebook is not used as a verb. There are no specific regulations for the words such as "Like", "Friend" or "Tag", for example, but I believe it may only be a matter of time. These regulations could pose problems for researchers in the future and warrant further scrutiny beyond the scope of this thesis.

I believe I have acted within the current guidelines, as all the Facebook images I have used belong to my own Profile and I have gained permission from the users whose names can be made out in these images. I have written permission from all my participants stating that I may use screenshots of their Facebook Profiles.

Note: the use of the term Facebook in this thesis is in no way linked to the Facebook brand in a way that implies partnership, sponsorship or endorsement (Facebook, 2013).

Study Design

This study has a mixed method, interpretive, multi-sited, ethnographic approach in which a responsive, iterative approach between the research participants, field sites and research questions was called for. Each participant interacted with their Facebook Profile and digital environment in a different manner and the ways in which the digital and the physical environments overlap also varied.

My ethnographic approach has been ongoing since my 2009 piece of research (Stirling, 2009) but for this study, as stated previously, the key to this sort of approach is gaining access to the particular participants from the culture. Understanding that I wanted to research first-year students meant that I needed to recruit a sample to be “friends” with on Facebook. Cohen et al. (2007) suggest the “quality of a piece of research stands or falls...by the suitability of the sampling strategy” (p.100), (see also Mujis, 2004; Wellington and Szczerbinski, 2009). In response to this, the next section discusses each method and the justification of my current sampling decisions and describes the process through which I came to my final ethnographic sample.

The study took place over the academic year 2010/11 and worked with a sample of first-year undergraduate students from a Northern Russell Group university. The aim of this was to incorporate a variety of student participants in the study. The study consisted of three stages of data collection; the first stage was a digital survey questionnaire of the full population of new undergraduate students at the university (4650 students) in August 2010; the second stage was a longitudinal multi-sited ethnography of a small sample of these respondents (n=6); and the final stage was a full population survey at the end of the academic year (June 2011).

Approaches to data gathering and sampling

Methods for data collection were both digitised and face-to-face and were as follows: Stage and date	Method for data gathering	Sampling method
First stage 19 th August 2010 – 15 th September 2010	An anonymous digital questionnaire.	Purposeful sampling email sent to all first-year student starters.
Second stage 19 th August 2010 – 10 th June 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An academic-year long, multi-sited ethnography of six participants. • Participant observation on Facebook. • Screenshots of the Participants' Facebook Profiles, Status updates, Wall and Photos, looked at once a month and field notes of these to observe patterns of use. • Face-to-face semi structured interviews and focus groups to discuss Facebook usage. 	Volunteer sampling from first stage questionnaire responses.
Third stage 10 th June 2011 – 30 th June 2011	• An anonymous digital questionnaire.	Purposeful sampling email sent to all first-year students registered at this point.

Fig.8 The approach to data gathering and sampling.

First stage - Questionnaire: Sampling justification and method

The decision to undertake a full-population census survey, as opposed to a random sampling (Mujis, 2004) approach, is in response to the twofold aim of the questionnaire: one, to allow participants to self-select for the longitudinal ethnographic study; and two, to give contextual background data which enabled me to discuss a little about what first-year university students do on Facebook and compare these data to similar national and international surveys (Ipsos MORI, 2009; Ofcom, 2009).

I worked closely with the university Student Services and Admissions departments to be able to access the new starter first years before they came to enroll at university. My reason for doing this was to get the students to volunteer to take part before they were bombarded with other commitments once they started university. The admissions department kindly sent my invitation email, including the questionnaire (see Appendix 1). In return for this, I included a question in the questionnaire (Q.8) asking the students whether they had used Facebook in relation to starting university, data which was then used by the department to help develop the next year's marketing and admissions strategy on Facebook. The email was sent on the 19th August 2010 when the students had received their A-level results and knew they had a place to study at the university.

The questionnaire was written using Google docs, which offers a free, online survey creator (see Appendix 1 for the actual questionnaire). The decision to use this allowed for the questionnaire to be emailed directly to the students, which I predicted would make them more likely to respond to it. The questionnaire was simple and brief to get as many people as possible to complete it. It began with the question "Facebook makes you feel..." followed by "because?" The questionnaire then followed two pathways of questions depending on whether participants answered "yes" or "no" in terms of Facebook usage. If participants answered "yes", it required them to self-report their Facebook usage i.e. how many times and where the site is accessed. These questions are built on studies by boyd & Harigattai (2010); Page, K. DK., & Mapstone, M. (2010); Selwyn (2008); and Thomas (2004). If the respondent answered "no", the questionnaire asks "why not?", and gives the opportunity for the respondent to report their use of another SNS. Both strands of the questionnaire end with a set of generic demographic questions: sex, age and ethnicity, and then give the respondent a chance to leave their contact details to self-select to take part in further research. This self-selection element is where the participants for the ethnographic study volunteered themselves. The aim of the demographic questions was to give a contextualised

picture to the ethnographic data, to enable a rough and ready comparison, to benchmark attitudes (Firebaugh, 2008) against other studies where age, sex and race are relevant (boyd & Harigattai, 2010; Ofcom, 2009; Pew, 2010), and to have an understanding of which sections of the population have not taken part. There were 683 responses to the questionnaire (see fig.9).

Second stage - Ethnography: Sampling justification and method

The ethnography used a volunteer sampling method (Mujis, 2004) to allow participants to take part in the study. There were n=161 students who left their contact details to volunteer and self-selected to take part in further research. I got in contact with these volunteers via email with further information regarding the research project and the nature of the ethnography (see appendix A). I requested that if participants were interested in taking part further in the study, they should email me back with the following details: name, name of course due to start in Sept. 2010 and their preferred contact email. The students who responded with this information were then asked to provide suitable times for meeting with me face-to-face to be fully briefed on the research project and the commitment it entailed. From this communication I received 38 responses. The next stage involved me trying to meet up with these thirty-eight different people in a range of focus groups on campus. This proved difficult and, after a few weeks of students not turning up at the allotted time and place, I came to the realisation that I should arrange a focus group at the halls of residence one evening. This strategy attracted six participants. I talked with them for a few hours and introduced the project, went through ethical considerations and gave them all the information sheet and consent form to sign (see Appendix 2.1 & 2.2). I explained that the ethnography would comprise a year-long set of interactions from when I met them, looking back to August 19th 2010, through to the end of the semester on 10th June 2011, and that I would use their Facebook Profile and meetings with them face-to-face as the places of the research. On Facebook, screenshots of the participants Facebook Profile, Status, Wall and Photos, would be viewed once a month and field notes would be taken on these. I also made clear that this data would be downloaded and printed out for analysis. Face-to-face interviews and focus groups to discuss Facebook usage would take part at three points throughout the year, once at the beginning of the project, the mid-point (early semester two) and the end (end of semester two). These face-to-face meetings would take place within university surroundings but in a convenient space for the students. Before the students left the focus group, I made it clear to them that they did not have to take part in the study but that if they wanted to

they had to Friend request me on Facebook and that before any data collection would take place they would need to return to me by post the signed consent form in the envelope I had provided.

By the end of that evening, all six had added me as a Friend on Facebook. These six were the sample for my ethnography (see fig. 9).

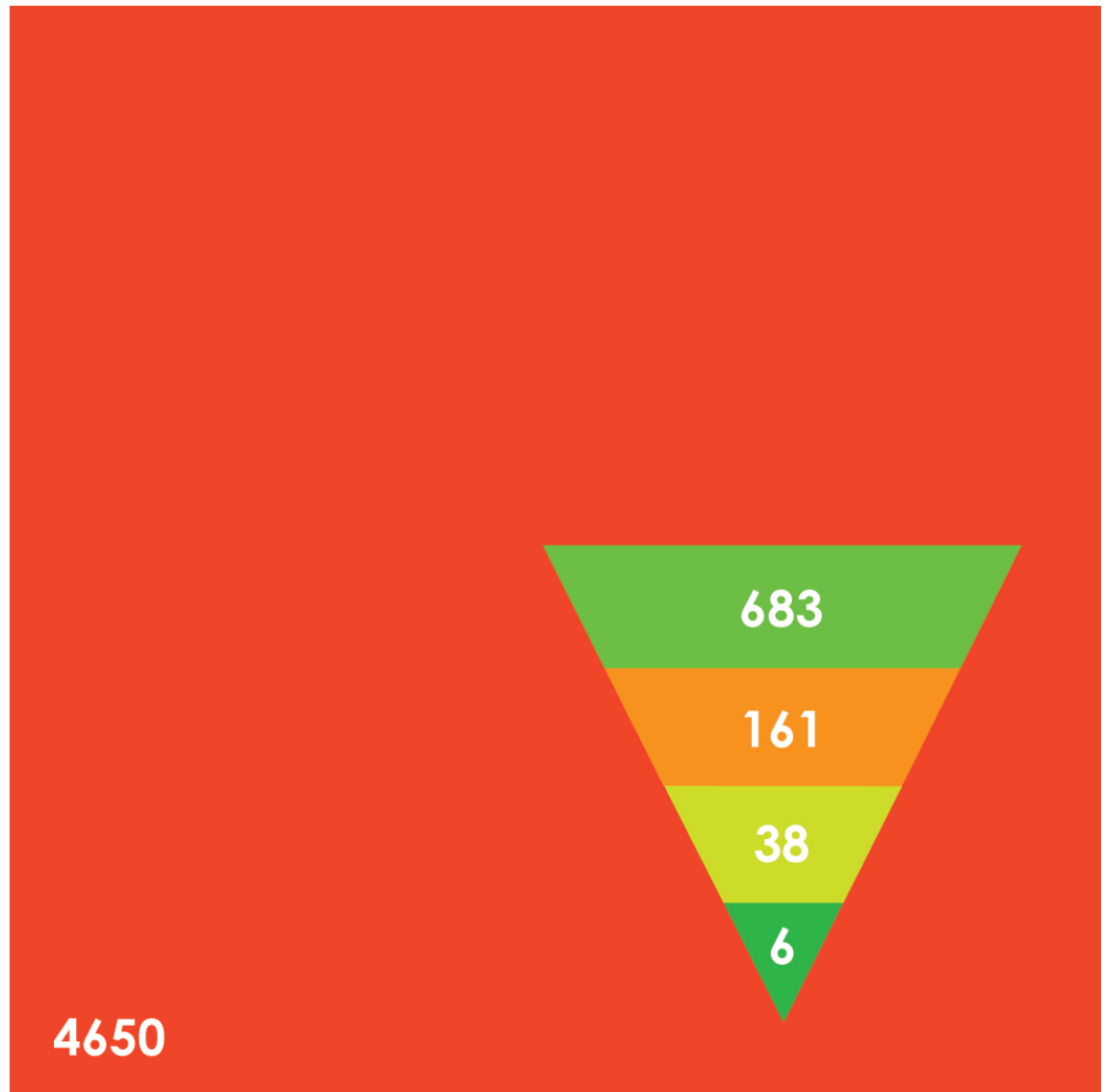


Fig.9 The number of responses in relation to the population.

These six participants are my Facebook Friends (FbF) and are discussed at length through a case study introduction, in Chapter 4 “A Presentation of Data” (see p.115).

Defining the boundaries of the research subject

Throughout the study, I used the pre-determined boundaries of the Facebook site's interface to drive my data gathering. For example, the structure of the interface of the site is in sections – “Wall”, “Photos”, “Group page” and “Profile page” – and I used these to define what I would analyse. Markham (2005) recognises that these “seemingly mundane decisions” which “create boundaries around the field of inquiry... are underwritten by the researcher's choices” (p.801). These boundaries are not determined by “location” but by “interaction” (Markham, 2005, p.802). I made these choices as the context of the interactions between the participants went on inside the boundaries of the Profile pages. I focused on the interactions between the research participants, as I wanted to know about their practices.

Snowballing

Throughout the ethnography, I made the decision to stick to the participants' personal Profiles although inevitably, my position as their Friend allowed me to see many of their Friends' Profiles. I focused my observations exclusively within this space for the majority of the participants. One participant invited me to join a private, closed Facebook Group (80 members), which was set up by his classmates to discuss issues relating to the course they were studying. I decided to join this Group as I recognised that it could offer me an interesting case to explore. This method of snowballing (Creswell, 2012), whereby other participants are added to the study, meant that the Facebook Group then became a field site in addition to the personal Profiles I was already studying. I was also introduced to some of one of my participant's flat-mates and I met them for a short focus group to talk about how the flat-mates used Facebook with each other in the context of being flat-mates. I obtained ethical consent from all of the people involved in these extra cases.

Third stage - Questionnaire

The final stage questionnaire was sent out to all undergraduate students who were still enrolled on a course by June 10th 2011. This date was the end of the exam period and the academic year. Once again, I obtained the email data from Student Services who acted in accordance with data protection. This final questionnaire (see Appendix 1.2) used the same format as the questionnaire sent in August but it asked whether the student felt their Facebook use had changed since starting university. If it had, there was a free response box for them to explain how. If the student said they did not use Facebook, then the questionnaire asked them if they stopped using Facebook over the last year at university with a free response box to explain why.

Reflections on method

The use of digital methods in ethnography offers a researcher a plethora of opportunities to access a vast range of data sets depending on the focus of the study. Within the confines of a study on Facebook, there are open public pages, closed secret groups and a varying range of profiles in between. While offering me a view of the cultural practices of the student participants, a disadvantage of this was the pure amount of data I had access to and decisions relating to where I would draw the boundary of my study. For example, a paper print-out of each participant's Facebook Profile may be between 50 to 500 pages of A4, for a 6-month period. The vast amount of data that can be observed when undertaking an ethnography on Facebook means that the researcher can, if they wish, observe all the data (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). There becomes no cut-off, no downtime. If the researcher uses their own personal Facebook Profile to undertake the research, this can be problematic as research life and personal life become intertwined.

Facebook affords both synchronous and asynchronous participant observation of Facebook Profiles, mine included, as well as Group spaces. Very early on in the study, I was shocked to discover that one of my FbF had commented on my Wall. I wrote in my journal *"he's written on my Wall!"* (ES journal extract 20.11.10), and went on to describe feeling surprised that my FbF would be interested in my Profile too. On reflection, I feel it was naïve of me to feel like this, as the likelihood of my FbF interacting with me on Facebook was quite high. People who are Friends on Facebook interact with each other. They comment on a Status, they post a Comment on each other's Walls and they stalk each other's Photos. These are examples of asynchronous participant observation. Through being a member of a closed Facebook Group I was able to view synchronous Facebook Chat between a group of six students, which took place while they were in a lecture. This was a backchannel discussion to the main lecture and took place without the lecturer's knowledge. This could be seen as an electronic "passing of notes in class" and I could have witnessed it had I been present within the lecture theatre. By using the digital method of observing the participants by Facebook, I could see their synchronous discussion of the lecture, which offered me a unique insight into the participants' use of Facebook.

The data collected

Quantitative	Qualitative
2 x digital questionnaires. 6 Participant's Facebook profiles from August 19 th 2010 to 10 th June 2011. Number of Status updates. Number of Photos. Number of Friends.	Field notes from Facebook participant observations. Field notes from university campus observations: halls of residences, library, student union, university quad (outside area). Focus group & interviews (x2) (Nov). Interviews 6 no. (Jan). Interviews 5 no. (June). Sally Flat focus group (May). Facebook Profile of participants: Wall, Info, any Messages sent, any Chat. Facebook Groups: Wall.

Fig.10 The range of data collected using the mixed method approach.

The data collected from these methods (see fig.10) are presented in Chapter 4, which follows this chapter.

The sample in context

To put the sample in context against the population of the students who started in 2010, the numbers are strikingly similar (see fig.11 & 12).

Female	52%
Male	48%
Overseas	11%
Home	89%
Under 18	0
18 - 20	91%
21 - 25	9%
26 - 30	1%
31 plus	1%

Fig.11 First-year enrolment figures 2010.

Female	55%
Male	45%
Overseas	13%
Home	87%
Under 18	0
18 - 20	91%
21 - 25	9%
26 - 30	1%
31 plus	1%

Fig.12 The sample of 2010 questionnaire respondents.

The multi-method approach I took in the study was to gain a broad view from different angles of student Facebook usage. Richardson (1998) describes this as crystallisation, a development from the idea of triangulating the data; she says, “there are far more than three sides from which to approach the world” (p.358). This study includes both quantitative and qualitative data, on a macro and a micro level, questionnaire data, which is taken as a snap shot, and longitudinal data from the ethnography. Through these, I believe I have many ways to view student Facebook use, as mentioned in my literature review. I draw on Richardson’s (1998) notion of crystallisation to deconstruct the idea of “validity”. She proposes that “there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves” (p.358). I see this in relation to my interpretation and representation of the data, which I discuss in more detail in the data analysis and presentation section later in this chapter. In analysing the crystallisation process as a metaphor, I found there were many facets of information and data available to me that I made the decision not to use and present in this study. There is limited scope within a PhD thesis and it would not be appropriate to keep and present all data collected. The choice to “Kill your darlings” (coined by a range of writers and artists over time, most notably William Faulkner) is a saying to describe the process used by artists and writers when they “cut characters or scenes which don’t serve the overall story” (Wickman, 2013). I believe I will see these “darlings” in the future in journal articles and conference presentations. Some of the “darlings” I killed were; a visual diary of Facebook use, in which I got my FbF to take photos of the environment where they were using Facebook, and some auto-ethnographic visual data of my own first-year university digital and physical environments.

The next section details my approach to analysing the data and discusses the theoretical frameworks, which support my interpretation, ordering and presentation of this data and my experiences.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Following on from the previous section, which discussed my methods of data collection, this section presents my approach to the analysis of that data. I present this in four sub-sections; the first draws upon three influential authors who work in the field of ethnographic and anthropological inquiry, Wolcott (1994), Okely (1994), and Markham (2009); the second explores the influence of a narrative approach to analysis; the third presents my data set and explains the methods of analysis I used for each set of data; and the fourth details the theoretical framework of analysis, which I applied to the data and helped me come to know first-year students' experiences of Facebook.

As Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggest, "qualitative research is endlessly creative and interpretive" (p.37). My experience over this project has been that the analysis and ordering of the data has been the most troublesome and challenging element of the research process. My interpretative practice towards data collection and analysis meant that I often felt overwhelmed by what I was seeing and experiencing, both in the data and in the literature I was drawing upon. As Gubrium & Holstein (2003) describe, the interpretive practice is the "constellation of procedures, conditions, and resources through which reality is apprehended, understood, organized and conveyed in everyday life...the how's and the what's of social reality" (p.215). Ultimately, this study is driven by my aim and research questions and these questions, derived from my reading of associated literature and my previous experience of HE, students and Facebook use, influence my current frames of analysis.

Description, Analysis and Interpretation (D-A-I) (Wolcott, 1994)

This section details Wolcott's (1994) description, analysis and interpretation approach. I see the research process as an iterative one as opposed to linear, that is, analysis is ongoing and I believe my analyses started with my choice of research aim and the literature within which I opted to position my study as opposed to the analysis happening when the data was "collected". As Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) suggest, "in ethnography the analysis of data is not a distinct stage of the research" (p.158). They suggest that this iterative process is the "movement back and forth between

ideas and data” (p.159) and I would add to that the literature that I have read. Wolcott (1994) suggests collecting data is the easy bit, the difficult thing is working out what to do with the data once you have collected it. He uses the terms description, analysis and interpretation to signpost the method. He suggests using these ideas in combination, not alone, and to be a storyteller with “my reflections, (grounded) in observed experience” (p.17). Observed experience has been key to my understanding of undergraduate Facebook use.

Wolcott (1994) proposes that description may include organising the data in chronological order, around critical events or around characters. In this sense, the layout and ordering structure of Facebook does this for me. My FbF data is ordered in reverse chronological order by character and I have a running commentary of critical events from my critical incidence screenshots. This is the stage of raw unordered data. Wolcott (1994) proposes that the analysis, or systematic transformation of data through coding, may take the form of highlighting findings into “chunks”, displaying findings using graphs, visuals and photos, with or without presentation, identifying patterned regularities in the data and contextualising the data within a broader analytical framework. The re-organisation of my FbF Status updates into themed topic categories helped me to see who was posting about what and when. At this point, data begins to have more of a sense of order but this is still descriptive.

In thinking about the interpretation of the data, Wolcott (1994) warns about being “pseudo-authoritative” (p.37), by saying “my research shows”, as this is problematic and to ensure I am clear about which results are based on field research. My interpretation of the data should be subtler than the analysis phase in that it “transcends factual data” (p.37) and probes what is to be made of them. This phase is interpretive and self-reflexive, possibly involving exploring alternative formats and inference. Wolcott (1994) asserts that each of these three stages can and should be used with varying “emphases” (p.11) when ordering and presenting data. I drew on this to organise my data.

Thinking through fieldwork (Okely, 1994)

I have been significantly influenced by anthropological approaches to both my data collection, through undertaking the ethnography, and also in my analysis of this rich dataset. Okely (1994) proposes that the interpretation of this material is a “continuing and creative experience” (p.32) and that there are “serendipitous connections to be

made” (ibid). These interpretations and connections are made when I move between writing and analysis, data and experiences, myself and my FbF. The development of the analytical framework of time, which I talk about later in this section, came from this process of self-immersing in the data. I have found this to be an experience that is grounded in my own lived experiences of Facebook use. I have used my own Facebook Timeline to revisit the research time period and remember what I was doing at that time. This helped me get into that time period frame of mind. Serendipitous experiences have littered this research project, particularly when attending conferences and hearing other scholars presenting work. A chance meeting or discussion of a reference has led me down a different path and a different way of seeing the data.

Accountability in research (Markham, 2009)

Throughout this research project write-up, I have been concerned with communicating my messy research journey into some sort of coherent presentation of the experience so that the reader can engage with, interrogate and learn from my findings. Searching out transparent and useful texts about the analysis process in literature has been one of the most challenging things. I think this is because each dataset could be interpreted by each researcher in a different manner and a check box tool kit seems woefully inadequate for dealing with the complexities of social life. Markham (2009) discusses what constitutes quality in post-modern qualitative Internet research, offering “interpretive rigour” (p.195) as an approach for applying legitimacy to our studies. This features throughout a reflexive research process, whereby I question my approach at each stage. The notion of accountability in research is also proposed by Markham (2009), who suggests that we become accountable by being able to explain what we did and why we did it against other methods. In the spirit of this, the following sections are my description and explanation of my analytical process so that the reader can gain a view of my experience and the decisions I made. Post-fieldwork, I applied the following questions proposed by Markham (2009, 143) to each of my datasets and asked “how can I help guide my readers so they understand my work?” (p.141).

What do I know? (added by me)

How do I know that?

So what?

Why did I conclude that?

What led me to that perception?

(Taken from Markham, 2009, p.143).

The notions of interpretative rigour and accountability replace the qualitative referents (Janesick, 2003) to go beyond descriptions of reliability, generalisability and validity. Other terms I took forward to apply to my research approach were to research with integrity (University of Sheffield, 2010) and to be authentic and practise wakefulness (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.182) in my research.

Narrative approaches to analysis and storytelling

My original approach has always been to research the everyday of students' experiences at university and, as such, this work has always been grounded in anthropological ethnographic study. As the study progressed, I became interested in telling the stories of my participants. I see research as inherently story-like. Each finding is an interpretation based on the researcher's experience and influences at that time and also based on the participants' experiences. By spending time on Facebook with my FbF, I also became aware of the biographical nature of the data I was experiencing and collecting and thus I developed a narrative approach to the analysis and presentation.

Flyvberg (2006, p.237) suggests that, "good narratives typically approach the complexities and contradictions of real life". My FbF offer different views of the same experience. A move away from "big stories of the recent past" (Plummer, 2001, p.4), as Bathmaker (2010, p.3) suggests that narrative research provides "opportunities and spaces for research participants as well as researchers". In response to this, I see this piece of research as moving away from research on "the student experience" towards research on the experiences of students.

A book, which resonated with me in relation to this, was Margaret Wolf's (1992) *Thrice Told Tale*. In which she (re)presents a piece of anthropological research as three differing "stories" (texts). This particularly picks up on the notion of persuading the reader through the presentation of the story in the desired manner – be that field notes, a "scientific" paper or a piece of fiction.

In my use of the term narrative, I mean focusing on an individual and their life experiences of the phenomenon in question. In this case, the way the students use Facebook is influenced by their biographic experience to date. Facebook is part of this biographic experience, as is the decision to attend university. I used a narrative approach to structure my analysis of the ethnography by creating interpretive stories

for each participant (McCormack, 2004). My aim was to be true to the data but also use it to make my point and strengthen my argument. By being loyal to the data, I made use of the participants' words but also gave an overview of the differing points of view (Bold, 2012). These stories are based on a thematic analysis of the data (Simkhada 2008) and can be seen as narrative representations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Atkinson and Delamont (2008) suggest that forms of data and analysis "reflect the forms of culture and social action" (p.288) being studied. In this manner, the data I collected and my choices of analysis were influenced by my Facebook use and the literature I have read, as well as my experiences of trying to analyse the data. Atkinson and Delamont (2008) propose that we should treat narratives as "performance acts" (p.290) as they are "forms of social action" (ibid). These I have reformed and represented as my FbF stories. Chase (2008) suggests that, as a narrative researcher, I should pay attention to the way I "interpret and represent the voices" (p.58) of my FbF. Chase (2008) also proposes that these voices and their representation are linked to the notion of how power operates in the research relationship. She asks, can narratives "speak for themselves?" (p.62). I acknowledge that my role as a researcher comes with a responsibility to discuss how I present the narrative stories and I also accept that this is a complex issue.

I crafted the narrative representations. I made the choices about which data to use. Spence (1986) calls the process "narrative smoothing" (p.211) while composing field and research texts. This explores the idea of creating clean unconditional plots. Clandinin & Connelly (2000, p.181) suggest that I should acknowledge the practice I went through when choosing which stories I did tell and which I left out. "Narrative smoothing" did take place through the choices I made, in terms of which posts and quotations I decided to use. In the same vein, Kermode (1981) suggests paying attention to the untold stories and discussing the selections I made about the data I chose for each story and the alternate stories that could have been presented. I discuss my approach to narrative smoothing below.

The FbF stories were written using a mixture of data, which includes; direct quotes from the face-to-face interviews, direct copies of Facebook Status updates and Comments or other interactions, such as Likes and Events. Each of the diary entries is a different piece of data. The frequency of diary entries directly relates to the frequency of that person's Facebook posting over the academic year (as shown in fig.24). Put simply, if they posted on Facebook frequently, their story will be longer. My choice to use a mixture of direct Facebook and interview quotations was to give a different feel

and tone of voice to each of my FbF. My aim was for each story to sound like the 'voices' of my FbF. Although I acknowledge that this is my interpretation of their stories, I believe that each FbF experience was different and I have tried to show this through the data I present. Chase (2008) suggests that "narrative communicates the narrator's point of view" (p.65) and this could be shown through the choices I made about which sections of data I chose to keep and which bits to lose. I adopted the stance of "researcher's supportive voice" (Chase, 2008, p.75), whereby my voice occupies some of the focus but for the most part the voices of my FbF take centre stage. The stories conclude with my personal experiences of researching Facebook. These are discussed and reflected upon in my story. I aim to create a "self-reflective and respectful distance between researcher and narrator's voices" (p.76). Including my own narratives is an autoethnographic approach (Chase, 2008) and by turning the "analytic lens on myself and my interactions with others" (p.69, emphasis changed) I have tried to understand Facebook culture reflexively. Bathmaker (2010, p.2) suggests it is important to remember that "narratives are collaborative constructions", through their making and in their reading. The narratives in this thesis have been constructed by my FbF, by me and by the readers of my thesis.

Drawing on this range of views on analysis, the following section details the data I analysed and the stages of analysis I went through.

Although this is presented as a neat list of data (see table, Fig.13) and analytical process, I do not see the research process as a linear one in which the analysis happens when the data is "collected". Analysis was ongoing throughout this project and started with my choice of research aim and the literature within which I opted to position my study. These analytical choices of what to study and where to focus my attention framed my view when I embarked on the fieldwork. My intention was to let my FbF guide me to what themes of Facebook use were important to them.

The data has to be analysed and communicated to the intended audience. Geertz (1973) proposes the notion that the data collected is in fact "our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they are up to" (p.9). Here I present the processes involved in the analysis of this data, in order to be transparent about my approach and so the reader can be clear about the complexity and nonlinear process I followed.

I present here my:

- Methods of analysis - these are practical e.g. Content analysis.
- Framework of analysis - these are theoretical. e.g. Time.

An overview of the Stages of analysis

Literature influences

Immersion in the ethnography

Time away from the field and the datasets

Markham – what do I know and how do I know it?

Reflecting

Open coding Facebook pages

Open coding field notes

Thematic coding from literature

Using diagrams to communicate these

Reflecting on my interpretations

Creating the analytical framework

Finding examples within the data

Ordering Facebook and face-to-face data into the story themes

Writing the FbF stories

Editing the FbF stories

My approach to data analysis was one of interpretation and iteration. Content analysis was used, based on the themes I identified from my literature review. These were notions of temporality, spatiality and social support. Time was the main analytical framework, whereby I examined the elements of time within the Facebook posts and the interview data. The data was analysed in two stages, which followed the research design:

First stage

- Descriptive statistics were used for the questionnaire data.
- The responses to the open questions were open coded.

Second stage

- Field notes were open coded
- Facebook profiles were downloaded and open coded
- Interviews were transcribed and open coded.

The open coded data sets were iteratively explored using the constant comparison

method, whereby data was compared, until key repeating themes were identified. I then applied Markham's (2009) questions (see p.79) to the coded data to ensure I could answer them. These were then cross-analysed between the Facebook and face-to-face data.

Methods of analysis

The following table (fig.13) shows the method of data collection and the method of analysis for each research question.

Research question	Method of data collection	Method of data analysis
1. What role does Facebook play in the lives of transitioning students?	1. Google docs questionnaire x 2 (Aug 10, June 11) 2. 6 participants Facebook Profiles (one academic year - 19 th Aug to 10 th June 2011) downloaded 3. News Feed downloaded once a month 4. "Critical incidents" screenshots taken by me (field notes) 5. "Interesting" screenshots taken by the participants 6. Face-to-face interviews with 6 participants x 3 (Nov 2010, Jan and June 2011) 7. Group profile x 2 (CS and LR) 8. Focus group with Sally flatmates	Descriptive statistics of frequency of use Wordle of descriptive emotional response Comparison between Aug and June Content analysis: what, when and where posting
2. Can we learn anything new about transition from looking at students' Facebook profiles?	1. Face-to-face interviews with 6 participants x 3 (Nov 2010, Jan and June 2011) 2. 6 participants Facebook Profiles (one academic year - 19 th Aug to 10 th June 2011) downloaded 3. Group profile x 2 (CS and LR) 4. Focus group with Sally flatmates	Content analysis: what, when and where posting
3. Can we learn anything new about students' experiences in HE from considering the role of time in students' lives?	1. 6 participants Facebook Profiles (one academic year - 19 th Aug to 10 th June) downloaded 2. Face-to-face interviews with 6 participants x 3 (Nov 2010, Jan and June 2011)	Content analysis: what, when and where posting
4. How useful is time as an analytical tool when researching Facebook?	1. 6 participants Facebook Profiles (one academic year - 19 th Aug to 10 th June 2011) downloaded 2. Face-to-face interviews with 6 participants x 3 (Nov 2010, Jan and June 2011)	Content analysis: what, when and where posting
5. What are the possibilities and limitations of Facebook as a research site and research tool?	1. 6 participants Facebook Profiles (one academic year - 19 th Aug to 10 th June) downloaded 2. "Critical incidents" screenshots taken by me (field notes) 3. Research journal entries	Thematic analysis: Functionality of FB Reflections on use

Fig.13 Method of data collection and the method of analysis for each research question.

Framework of Analysis: The Social Analysis of Facebook Time

My analytical framework has two meta-themes; these are time and social interaction. This section describes how I developed these frames of analysis and how they are applied to the data and used in the discussion section to organise the findings.

Through my ethnographic fieldwork of using and researching Facebook, I came to understand the importance of time on Facebook in many ways. Facebook, as with many SNS is time-stamped on each occasion that a user interacts with the site. The time-stamp is usually a small note showing the date, hour and minute when the comment was posted. The time and date used in this manner offer a precise way of knowing when each user was interacting with their Wall or making a Status update or uploading a Photo.

Drawing on Adam's (1995) terminology, Facebook is an "other" time. I was looking to explore the site through a different lens from clock time. Although everything a person does is time-stamped to the second, for some people it allows communication to function outside the norms and conventions of clock time. It is frowned upon to phone someone after 9pm, but on Facebook if you are showing as green (on the Chat function) you are available for a chat. Even if you're not instantly available, a Message or Wall post can be left for the person to read later.

This Facebook clock-time is dominant in the interface but less so in my FbF lives. When something has happened recently (within a couple of days), the time-stamp is directly relational to those days (after 24 hours). This shows some of the scales of time on Facebook and links to Lemke's (2000) work on timescales. This offered me a way of recording and comparing how the different participants interacted with Facebook.

As well as drawing upon the work of Adam (1995) and Lemke (2000) for my analytical framework, I was also influenced by my participants' reflections on the relationship between time and Facebook. Mike described:

If you're putting thought into your Status update, "why?" I spend too much time on Facebook and I know it's a really terrible thing, but I seem to be quite apathetic about it at the same time?

He went on to explain:

It is a time thing (Facebook), it's a very good time thing, it's designed to be a time thing. I think so. When you see all this media about people being addicted to Facebook, it's no surprise – that's what it's designed to do. The fact that they do that shows good design, not a case of Facebook being evil, they're just designing to allow people to procrastinate.

Josie suggested:

There is something about the rolling nature of Facebook that means it is never off. I can always be contacted and people think nothing of sending a Message or posting at 00.30, that didn't happen before.

These instances in the mid-point interviews were strong influences for my understanding of the importance of the relationship between time and Facebook. I go on to describe the terms I draw upon from the literature review to structure my analysis of Facebook use.

Time as an analytical framework – typology of time

- Liminal/liminoid
- When time
- Space-time
- Timescales

The themes of social support and social interaction on Facebook have been underlying themes in this research from its inception. The very social nature of Facebook was an influence; it is a *social* network site, whose aim is to “connect people” (Facebook, 2012). The notion of social support through the first-year transition period has been found to be a significant factor in whether a student stays at university and is successful (West et al., 2009; Wilcox et al., 2005).

To support my analysis, I explored ways in which sociality is framed on Facebook, drawing upon the work of boyd and Ellison (2012), who propose that the way people communicate and share are the most important feature of SNS. The ways of being social and with whom my participants are being social on Facebook are my lenses for analysis.

Social support as an analytical framework – typology of social

- Being public
- Being social
- Being academic
- Liminal friendships

This framework is used in the discussion Chapter 5, to order the findings and discussion.

In the next section, I discuss the ways in which these data are presented in Chapter 4. I believe the analysis of the data and the presentation of data are intrinsically linked and much of my understanding of the data is a result of my desire to develop alternative ways of presenting it.

A note on data presentation

My intention within this thesis is to present my work through a range of different means and not to wholly rely on the written word to communicate my process and findings of the project. The reason behind this is twofold. Firstly, the way I see the world is not only as a set of texts. I understand experiences as three-dimensional spaces and see the visual as an important way to describe what I see. Secondly, the multi-modal and visual nature of Facebook as part of a multi-sited ethnography means that I have drawn on a rich range of data and I believe some of this should be echoed in the data presentation. The visuals are not used to make data easier to read. Visuals take time to understand, as text sometimes does.

The data in this thesis are presented in three sections; an infographic is used to give an overview of the main themes of analysis; second, the Facebook landscape, which is a contextual overview of the questionnaire responses presented using graphic visuals and text; and third, my FbF ethnographic stories. Here I present my thoughts on and rationale for my three choices of data presentation; infographics, visuals (including Wordles), and ethnographic stories.

These different datasets offered a multi-dimensional view on the phenomenon of Facebook use. They were integrated to create a detailed understanding of Facebook in

this context and support the discussion section of the thesis, which precedes the presentation of data chapter. The process of collecting and working with data to analyse and present it is iterative and interpretative. I call the section “A presentation” of the data as I acknowledge that data presentation is an interpretative activity and others may interpret the raw data in another manner using the same or another analytical framework. I too could interpret this data differently, using Actor Network Theory (Latour, 2005), for example.

Information graphics

Information graphics or infographics are graphic visuals, which are usually created using numerical data. McCandless (2011) suggests that “we’re all visual now” (p.1) and his response to what he sees as the glut of data from the web is to create “well-designed...useful charts” (ibid) to help us understand it all. His main aim is to explore the relationships between data, not only to describe the data. Tufte (1997) proposes that poor use of graphic representations is merely “chartjunk” (p87) and Grady (2011) suggests that it is important to create graphic representations that are as “thoughtfully informative as they are excellent graphically” (p.497). My aim in interpreting and presenting the data within this thesis has been to create informative graphics that stand alone as pieces of visual communication, as well as alongside the written words.

My presentation of the data section begins with an information graphic in the form of a timeline which aims to give an overview of the findings and themes from my FbF stories. I have used a range of data to produce the thematic time information graphic. I drew upon content analysis of my FbF Facebook Profiles and the typology of Facebook usage: user profile and site usage. For example, data surrounding the how often a Status is updated and the topic of the Status update. I used this to track who posted what and at what time of year. Pinney (2012) suggests, “the info gives the graphic its form. Otherwise the ‘graphic’ is most likely acting as an illustration”. The raw data from my FbF Profiles is this “info” that went into the stories.

Visualisations

The Facebook Landscape, the second section of the data presentation chapter, is made up of data from the responses to the questionnaire. These responses detail, for example,

the number of times Facebook is checked in a day and using what type of device. Information graphics were used to show the descriptive statistics visually and to help the reader to compare the data.

Wordles

A Wordle is a text-based “tag-cloud” visualisation created using www.wordle.net and text which the user inputs. The Wordle website encodes “word frequency information via font size” (Viegas et al., 2009). An example of a Wordle can be see in fig.14 below and was created using the text in this section of the thesis.

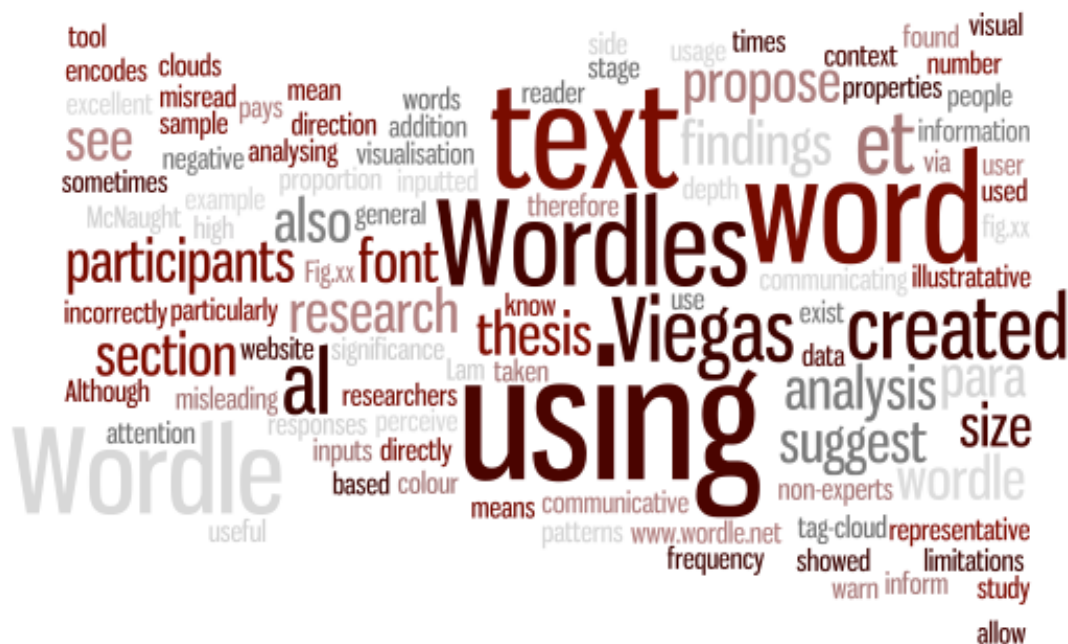


Fig.14 Wordle created using the text from this section of the thesis.

McNaught & Lam (2010) suggest that using Wordles can be a useful tool to inform research, particularly in the analysis stage, where they can allow researchers to see general patterns from the participants’ responses. They also suggest using Wordles in research analysis. They found that there are limitations with using word clouds, namely that the words are taken out of context and can, therefore, sometimes be misleading. Viegas et al. (2009) propose that the “visual depth of Wordles” (para. 5.0) means that the reader pays more attention when analysing the data, but they warn that people can

perceive the Wordle incorrectly. The findings of their study showed that a high proportion of participants did not know that the size of the font was directly representative of the number of times a word is used in the text sample inputted. In addition to this, they misread the colour of the word and the direction of the word as having significance, when in fact they do not. Although this negative side to Wordle usage does exist, Viegas et al. (2009) propose that the “communicative and illustrative” (para. 1.1) properties of Wordles are excellent for a range of audiences.

Ethnographic stories

I see my FbF stories as the presentation of my narrative inquiry. I have been influenced in the production of these by a range of ethnographers (boyd, 2006; Geertz, 1973; Bollestorff, 2008) and they are produced in the style of the ethnographic monograph (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). The six ethnographic stories represent the six ethnographic participants and six different key moments of time during the academic year. These ethnographic stories are, in essence, the thick description Geertz (1973) advocates, and fulfil my aim of describing the actualities of Facebook use fully. As discussed previously in the narrative section, the stories were written using direct quotes from the interview data and direct copies of Facebook Status updates and Comments or other interactions. Throughout the stories, Facebook grammatical actions (see below), such as Like, Tag and Activities, are used in their direct form from Facebook. These can be linked back to Chapter 1, the Grammar of Facebook (see p.8 for full description if needed) e.g.

RECENT ACTIVITY marks a Facebook grammatical action

Grammatical actions are equally as important as the Status updates or Photos uploaded and often show where a person is or whom they are with, through attending a Facebook Event, for example. Throughout the data and discussion sections, the use of colour from the time infographic is a link between the infographic, the FbF story and the discussion of the data sections. For example, Sally is represented by pink.

Reflections on analysis and presentation

Initially, I struggled with the ordering and layout of both Chapter Four and Chapter Five. I began by presenting them together as a “findings and analysis” chapter but I soon realised

that the stories and discussion together lacked the clarity needed to communicate the key analytical themes. I found this stage challenging in terms of reorganising and critically analysing the data several times for frequently discussed themes. This process of working with the data and writing and re-writing my analysis of it helped me develop my understanding of the themes of Facebook use. As Richardson (2008) suggests, writing itself is a method of inquiry, and in this project I believe I have also developed my ability and understanding of what knowledge I can come to know through writing.

Remaining thesis outline

This section concludes with my reflective account of “an immersive ethnography”. This is to give the reader a flavour of my experiences of data collection and my relationship with Facebook. Following that, the remainder of the thesis is data and discussion. Chapter 4 describes first-year undergraduate Facebook behaviours in “A Presentation of Data”. Chapter 5 analyses and discusses these practices and behaviours in “A Discussion of the Data”.

Experiences of an immersive ethnography

"I'm deactivating my account"

My time off Facebook July 5th 2011 – September 5th 2011

The year-long ethnography studying first-year undergraduates' Facebook use came to an end with a self-imposed temporal boundary on 10th June 2011. I decided at the start of the study to limit my interaction with the students to the academic year 2010-2011. I did this because I am particularly interested in the experiences of these students in the transition year and so wanted to follow them through to its completion. Throughout my year of study, I had been watching the students' Updates appearing in my News Feed on Facebook and had become very used to the ebbs and flows of their lives. Watching their experiences of university life and academic life roll out, punctuated with assignment and exam crises, excitement about Christmas or a flat mate's birthday or a funny Frape a Friend had posted. As June went on and my detailed analysis of the Profiles was beginning, I found it increasingly hard to stop reading the participants' Facebook updates. I completed the final round of face-to-face interviews and made the decision to hide the participants from my News Feed. I did not want to Unfriend the participants on Facebook, as this is my main form of contact with them and my data source, but I felt I needed some space from the field.

To hide someone from my News Feed, simply means hiding that person's Status updates and his or her public interactions on Facebook will no longer be visible to me in that way. "OK", I thought, "this will make analysis much easier!" But unfortunately I was unable to stop looking at the participants' Profiles. I was concerned that I may be missing out on some data, or that by exploring different sections of their Profiles I would understand their experiences more fully. I could not stop going back to Facebook every time I started to write something and it was becoming an intense distraction.

At this point I decided to do something I had been toying with for a while. I decided to deactivate my Facebook account for a month.

This action may seem inconsequential; some readers may think "so what? Why is she making a big deal out of this? Does she really *need* to deactivate her account? Can't she just turn it off? Leave it alone?" I thought that would be possible, but it was not. My life had

revolved in and around Facebook for the last two years and as I admitted at the beginning of my MA dissertation, “I am a Facebook addict” (Stirling, 2009). I was beginning to feel that I could not gain the distance for an analytical view of the site or my participants’ use of it. This ethnography had been immersive. Madden (2010) describes an ethnographer who is immersed in a society or culture they are studying as being “at one” (p.78) “with the sociality of their participant group” (ibid) and that this can lead to the ethnographer being “lost” (ibid) in the field, and that it is important to be able to step back. I became concerned that there was a blurring of boundaries between “participant-as-observer and observer-as-participant” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p.102) and this was making my analysis of the field lacking in rigour or a level of higher thinking. I felt too close and comfortable to be critical. Hammersley & Atkinson (1983) suggest that the ethnographer should be wary of feeling “at home” (p.102) in the field and that:

There must always remain some part held back, some social and intellectual distance. For it is in the space created by this distance that the analytical work of the ethnographer gets done...the ethnography can be little more than the autobiographical account of a personal conversation.

I have always believed that I am an insider researcher of Facebook but that at this point I needed some space to consider the data away from the field.

How did I feel about deactivating my Facebook account?

I had mixed emotions about leaving Facebook. Half relating to my PhD study and knowing it was what I needed to do to get my data analysis underway and half the social side of my life, as I felt like I would be missing out on lots of things. For me, Facebook brings together many of my distributed social networks: friends overseas; sharing photos of gatherings where I am not present and day-to-day banter and discussions between people who share my interests. One thing that struck me was my need to tell everyone that I was leaving Facebook. It concerned me that people would not know where I had gone or think that I had deleted them. There were Message threads left hanging, which could not be continued as I had left Facebook. They would have to move to email but would the person read the Message in time, before I left? How will I remember peoples’ birthdays without Facebook to remind me? Will people forget about me because I am not there?

When I thought about leaving Facebook in relation to my PhD, it made me feel panicky that I would not be able to go back and look at the data (even though I downloaded the data as PDFs). I worried that I would not be able to see what everyone was doing, that I would not be able to relate to the printed Profiles in the same way as the dynamic website page. For the first time in this study, I was experiencing what I imagine other ethnographers feel when they have to leave the community they are part of. The difference in researching Facebook is that I had had unlimited access to my FbF Profiles for the last year.

Going back on

As the beginning of September loomed, I knew it was time to get back involved with Facebook. I really enjoyed being away from all the chatter. I felt like people expected me to be on Facebook and to be involved. People had even commented on my Wall before I had a chance to post a Status update to say, “hi I'm back”. Since I had been away, a new interface had been introduced (see fig.15). There was a column on the right hand side that looked like Chat. I wondered whether it might be the people who are available to chat with me but it did not tell me this when I logged on. I reflected whether this is what people feel like when they first use the site. Had I become an outsider? I no longer had all the insider knowledge. Would I get back up to speed? I had two months of Facebook life to catch up on and it was unsettling.

An excerpt from my research journal reads:

“I don't want to go on yet as I can't handle any more data or experiences. Ethnographic practice is difficult to step away from...” (ES research journal 02.09.11).



Fig.15 New Facebook interface 2011.

Off Facebook for the second time

Extract from my research journal, September 2012.

My Facebook account has been disabled for the last two months. My son was stillborn, we were told the news on 18th June 2012 at the hospital in Sheffield. One of the first few things that went through my head was that I needed to disable my Facebook account. This may seem strange to some people, that at a time of great devastation I was thinking about my Facebook account. For me I was concerned about the attention. The two weeks previously there had been many interactions with friends asking me “has the baby arrived yet?”, “when are you due?” and “don’t worry it will arrive soon”. The thought of having that stream of questions continuing unnerved me. And the thought of telling everyone this very private piece of news on Facebook was too much to bear: The comments, both sincere and fleeting would have overwhelmed me even more so than the huge amount of cards and flowers that we received at our door.

My Facebook friends are such a mix of my best, dearest friends, work colleagues and research participants – the many facets of my life, thrown together in that digital space. I

didn't want to connect and share with them all. I really wanted to be offline, absent, disconnected.

Now the time has come where I feel more comfortable with the thought of returning to Facebook. Returning will mean I face the interaction of my Facebook friends, some may not have realised I was even pregnant. I will need to tell the remaining people that have no idea what has happened. It is a scary thought, for the most part because I have no experience of dealing with the death of my son before.

Friends have suggested that some of my Facebook friends will be concerned by my absence, but unsure how to contact me, as Facebook was our main communication method.

I plan to post a picture of our son as my first status update. At first I was unsure about sharing this, I was concerned about Facebook's data policy, whereby they own all photos uploaded to the site, but then I decided it is an important way to involve and communicate with the wide range of connections in my life.

Upon reflection, both times that I have been away from Facebook have made me realise the ubiquitous nature of it, not only in my own life, but also in my Friends' lives, the lives of my acquaintances and in wider society. In my own experience, the expectations of people towards Facebook have changed over the last four years. Facebook used to be a small personal space to share Photos, Comments and in jokes with a few friends on a daily basis. It has changed into a space full of advertising, where I Post on a weekly basis and when I do I tend to share information through weblinks, my Friends promote their businesses and interactions have become shorter and less personal in nature.

Summary of Methodology

Chapter 3 has detailed my thoughts and intentions in relation to my methodological decisions in this longitudinal, mixed method, micro level ethnographic study of undergraduate Facebook usage.

The large-scale questionnaire data enabled me to gain a contextual background overview of Facebook use and the connective ethnographic approach gave me insight into the participants everyday lives both in a digital space, Facebook, and in a physical space, face-to-face. These two datasets are presented as The Facebook Landscape and My FbF Stories, in the following, Chapter 4.

My ethical approach has always been that of honesty and integrity. I believe I have been open, communicated my intentions to my participants and not caused them any emotional distress or harm. I acknowledge that my choice to use my own Facebook Profile could be seen as an unethical act but, as I discussed in the ethics section, I used the necessary procedures to protect myself, my participants and my Friends on Facebook by setting up limited Profiles for my FbF. My decision to do this was because I felt it was unethical to create a new “researcher” Facebook Profile to represent me in the field.

My analytical approach was two-stage and two-fold; a content analysis process first, followed by the two analytical frameworks of time and social support. These were used to present my six FbF stories.

My approach to data presentation could be described as a mixed method approach and this includes traditional text-based writing as well as a range of visualisations and information graphics, which supplement the writing.

Facebook is a different beast than it was in 2009 (see fig.15). The architecture is different, the interface is different and the ways in which users interact have changed. The language used to describe use has changed. We no longer throw sheep at each other and rarely get a Poke. We are more likely to be Tagged in a Status update and Check-in to a place we are visiting. The interface in 2009 was predominantly text based with Photos a secondary element accessed from the Photos tab. In 2013, photos are larger and feature on multiple layers of the profile page. In between the two iterations shown in figs 17 & 18, there have

been other configurations of the Profile page, including a two-column view. Each of these has influenced the way I see Facebook and the interactions taking place there.



Fig.16 My Facebook profile in 2009.



Fig.17 My Facebook profile in 2013.

For those reading this who use Facebook, you are doing so with 2013 onwards Facebook eyes. Please do return to the grammar section at the front of this thesis and remember what 2010 Facebook looked like before you read the next chapter. Through the following data presentation and analysis, I was concerned with understanding and communicating how my FbF interacted with Facebook and exploring what we can we learn from them.

Not only are you probably reading this with 2013 Facebook eyes, I am writing with them too and I acknowledge that they must be influencing my interpretation of the data. In the same way that my own future gaze may change and I could interpret the data differently in another space-time. Now, in late 2013, I view Facebook differently from the way I did in 2010. Changes to function mean that I no longer use Facebook Chat as I find it intrusive. Another reason, as a result of my continuous use and experiences of the site, is that I feel bored of using it and in some ways tied to it as a method of communication. Sometimes my Friends' Posts do not show up, as a Facebook algorithm now decides which ones are important and posts these to the top of my News Feed. My Friend count has risen from 363 to 430. My researcher's view is different to that of my daily use. When undertaking my key data collection time period, I was using Facebook on an hourly basis. Now I check Facebook maybe three times a day.

Nicole Ellison, in her keynote at the Youth 2.0 conference at The University of Antwerp (titled A Tangled Web: Social Relationships, Social Capital, and Social Media Use among US Youth), suggested that researchers of Facebook need to make explicitly clear which version of Facebook they are talking about. I agree with this and I further add that we need to acknowledge the influences current Facebook architecture and our current Facebook practices have on our frames of analysis. In writing up this research I did visit my FbFs' current timelines to see what they were doing and also to go back to review the data from 2010. The new Facebook "timeline" feature has meant that I can easily go back to view my participants' Profiles using the month and year feature. This has been helpful during the analysis process, when I realised I had forgotten to unhide some of my FbF Comments I could just go back and view them. In this re-viewing in the new timeline interface, the Photos were more prominent and so the images had a stronger presence, even though they were exactly the same Status updates. It would be interesting to compare the two different views to see whether the prevalence of images made would now make any impact on my analysis.

CHAPTER 4: A PRESENTATION OF THE DATA



Introduction

The theme of time discussed in the literature review is an important lens for my analysis of students' uses of Facebook. The relationship between time and education and particularly time and the liminal period, which can be seen in the first-year experience, is the important over-arching theme in my analysis and runs through the range of data presented here. My organisation of the project data findings is temporally bounded by the academic year, which ran from 20th September 2010 to 10th June 2011. The first contact with the participants was on 19th August 2010 when they received their A-level results and knew they would have a place to study at the university. My decision to organise some aspects chronologically is because I have used "time" as an analytical lens. By presenting the data in this way, I show how time is important and a major organising factor in university life.

This chapter is the presentation of the data from my empirical research. The chapter is structured into three sections; the first is an infographic "**Timeline of the Academic Year**" explaining the key points and how these relate to my key themes of analysis, which are:

- making friends
- administration
- disconnection
- managing friends
- academic study
- procrastination and play

The second section, entitled "**The Facebook Landscape**", gives an overview of the data from the two questionnaires; this offers a contextual background to the study, exploring themes of use, access and distance and frames the detailed ethnographic accounts that follow. The chapter concludes with **six stories of my Facebook Friends**: Ruth, Josie, Tomas, Sally, Mike and Ying. The section begins with short descriptions of each Facebook

Friend and then each is presented thematically (following the themes highlighted in the infographic) in time through the academic year. I use one Facebook Friend to illustrate each of the themes using their own story; although the experiences I present here were all typical practices of all the participants at some point over the year.

I have chosen to present the stories in this manner as, through my data collection and analysis, I have come to realise the importance of the interconnectivity of the relationships between time, university life and Facebook. Adam (1995) offers the view that through “daily educational practice” the “dominant temporal structures and norms of society are absorbed, maintained, re-created and changed” (p.59). It is these daily practices, temporal structure and norms on Facebook that I have been exploring and present in the following sections.

These analyses draw on the work of Adam (1995) who looks beyond clock and calendar time and uses the term “when time”. “When time” does have a relationship with “clock time” but is linked to the “norms, practices and values of those involved” (p.22). “When time” is more cyclical and less linear, linked to nature and cultures; “knowledge of the past and anticipations of its consequences, all are brought to bear on calculations about the future” (p.22). In this case it is the cultures of the university experience and the practices of Facebook within that. Time is looking forward to the future and backward to the past. All these experiences and knowledge combine to be “inextricably interwoven in judgments about what constitutes the ‘right’ time to engage in certain activities” (ibid). Within the university experience, the “right” time might be choosing which student house to live in and with whom. Both “clock time” and “when time” have an impact on Facebook and students’ experience of it. The norms and practices of Facebook use facilitate “when time” in response to a user’s interactions, a poke or a Comment on a Status, for example. Learning these norms is a responsive process from and between the other users. Although the majority of practices which take part at university are governed by clock and calendar time, there is a rigidity of the semester which means that certain activities happen at a certain time, regardless of the actual clock or calendar time. For example the university Semester One starts with Fresher’s week and ends with the exam period. These activities are not bounded to specific dates of the year, they take place regardless of the calendar and could be described as an example of when time.

The research questions, which have been guiding my data collection and analysis are:

1. What role does Facebook play in the lives of transitioning students?
2. Can we learn anything new about transition from looking at students' Facebook Profiles?
3. Can we learn anything new about students' experiences in HE from considering the role of time in students' lives?
4. How useful is time as an analytical tool when researching Facebook?
5. What are the possibilities and limitations of Facebook as a research site and research tool?

Research Q	Where answered?
1	The Landscape of Facebook, FbF stories
2	FbF stories
3	FbF stories
4	FbF stories & Eve's story
5	Eve's Story

Fig.18 Where in the following section each research question is answered.

Timeline of the academic year

Overview of data and analytical themes

The infographic overleaf (fig.19) shows the six themes of analysis (as listed previously): making friends; administration; disconnection; managing friends; academic study and procrastination and play, and when they feature most predominately in the lives of each of my Facebook Friends over the academic year. The thicker the stripe of colour the more that theme featured in that period of the year. The sub-headings on the left correspond to the themes that will be discussed in more detail in the Facebook Friends ethnographic section. The titles on the left hand side of the diagram are sub-themes, which are explored in the discussion section. All of my Facebook Friends engaged each activity at some point over the academic year to a greater or lesser extent. The first year of university is not a homogeneous experience (Harvey et al., 2006) but students do share some similar activities and practices.

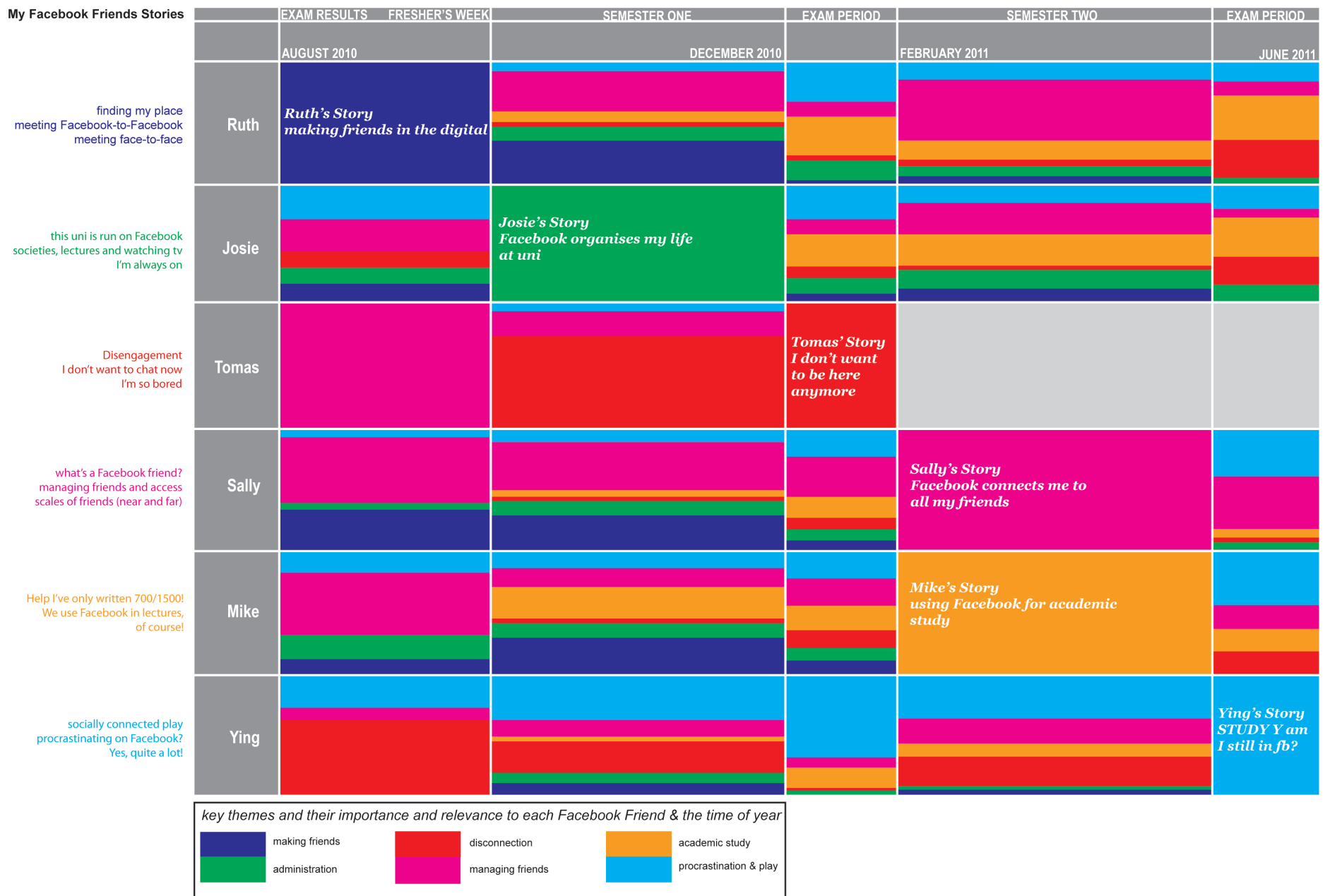


Fig.19 Infographic timeline of Facebook use, showing my FbF use of time over the academic year 2010/11.

The Facebook Landscape
How do first-year students use Facebook?

Contextual findings of the Facebook user population.

The data presented in this section is taken from the two questionnaires undertaken at the start and the end of the research period (see Chapter 3, p.80, for full details). The following section gives an overview of the data from both the questionnaires (see appendix A), which offers a contextual background to the study. The data is presented here in two sections, to support the detailed ethnographic accounts which follow.

The questionnaire results are detailed in two sections:

1. The map of Facebook users

- demographic data of the respondents
- how many students use Facebook?

2. Topography of Facebook use

- how, what, where and why do respondents use Facebook?
- how does Facebook make respondents feel?

I present my data through visual methods (as discussed in the previous section, see p.95), with the aim of helping the reader to understand the Facebook landscape at a glance, and due to the fact that it complements the predominantly visual nature of Facebook.

The contextual overview explores patterns of use: how, where, what and why students are checking Facebook. This aims to set the broader context of Facebook use in the university setting. The small sample of my Facebook Friends who took part in the follow-on ethnography were not intended to be a representative sample, but these data suggest that those who took part in the more intensive study fitted well within this contextual overview.

I never knew Facebook had such a big impact on university life. I don't know, I feel like Facebook is just something for socialising but here it involves the whole university like, wow. It's something I never had in my country, we don't have a Facebook page for the university or a Facebook group for the university club, we

don't have anything like that (Ying excerpt from focus group Nov 2010).

The new students' experiences of Facebook and the Facebook practices linked to university life changed over the year. Ying found she used the university Facebook Page and society Groups on Facebook, something that she had never experienced before. These new Facebook and university practices are detailed in the following sections.

1. The Map of Facebook

Demographic data

The following infographic (fig.20) details the demographic data of the respondents of the questionnaire, showing data about the whole invited population (4653), compared to the sample who answered (n=683), and comparing gender, student status and age.

96% of the sample use Facebook. These findings replicate those from Ipsos MORI (2008) who found that 91% of undergraduate students describe themselves as using SNS "regularly" or "sometimes" (p.10) and also that of Somer & Jenkins (2008), who found that for students at The University of Sheffield, social network sites have become "taken for granted, as a part of everyday life" (p.263), with 90% of those interviewed being members of one or more sites. Raynes-Goldie (2010) describes how increasingly important it is for "one's social life to be on the site". She continues that Facebook is now the default method of communication for this age group, as you can rely on Facebook to get in contact with a person.

The students' use of Facebook was continued at university, rather than them becoming members simultaneously when they started university. Over 95% of the students questioned had been a member of Facebook for over a year or more before starting university. This is shift change, since boyd (2008) suggested that Facebook membership was a rite of passage linked to starting university or college.

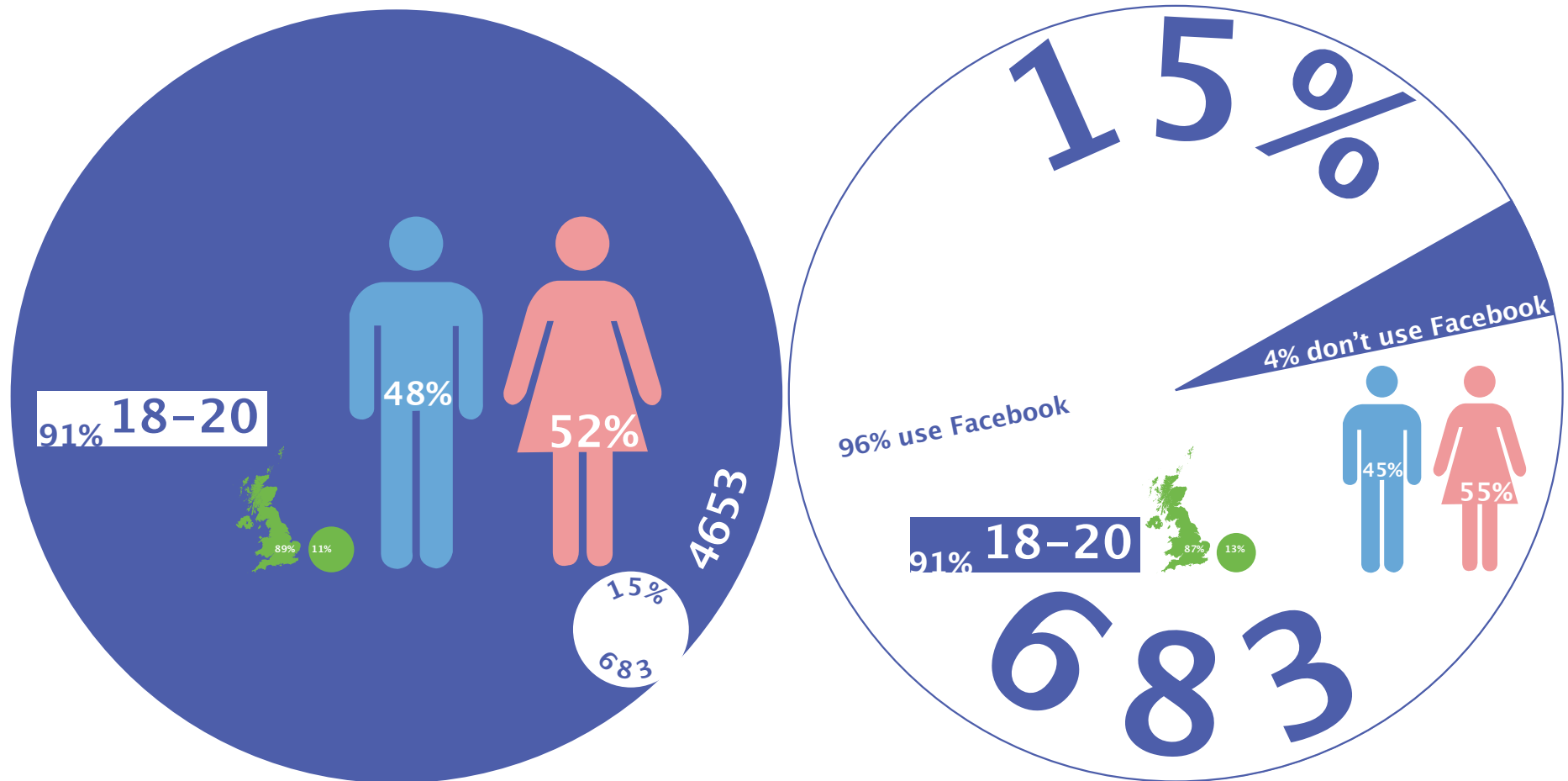


Fig.20 Population of students surveyed, compared to percentage of the first-year students who answered the questionnaire, basic demographic data.

2. Topography of Facebook

How, what, when, where & why?

Within the Facebook Landscape, the topography is made up of the student interactions, which take place on Facebook. These have a relationship with the wider student environments, such as lecture theatres and halls of residences and the activities that take place therein. The topography also includes how often the students use Facebook and the nature of the activities in relation to the grammar outlined on p.8. It shows what device they used to check Facebook, where they were when they were checking it, and what activities they did when they were checking.

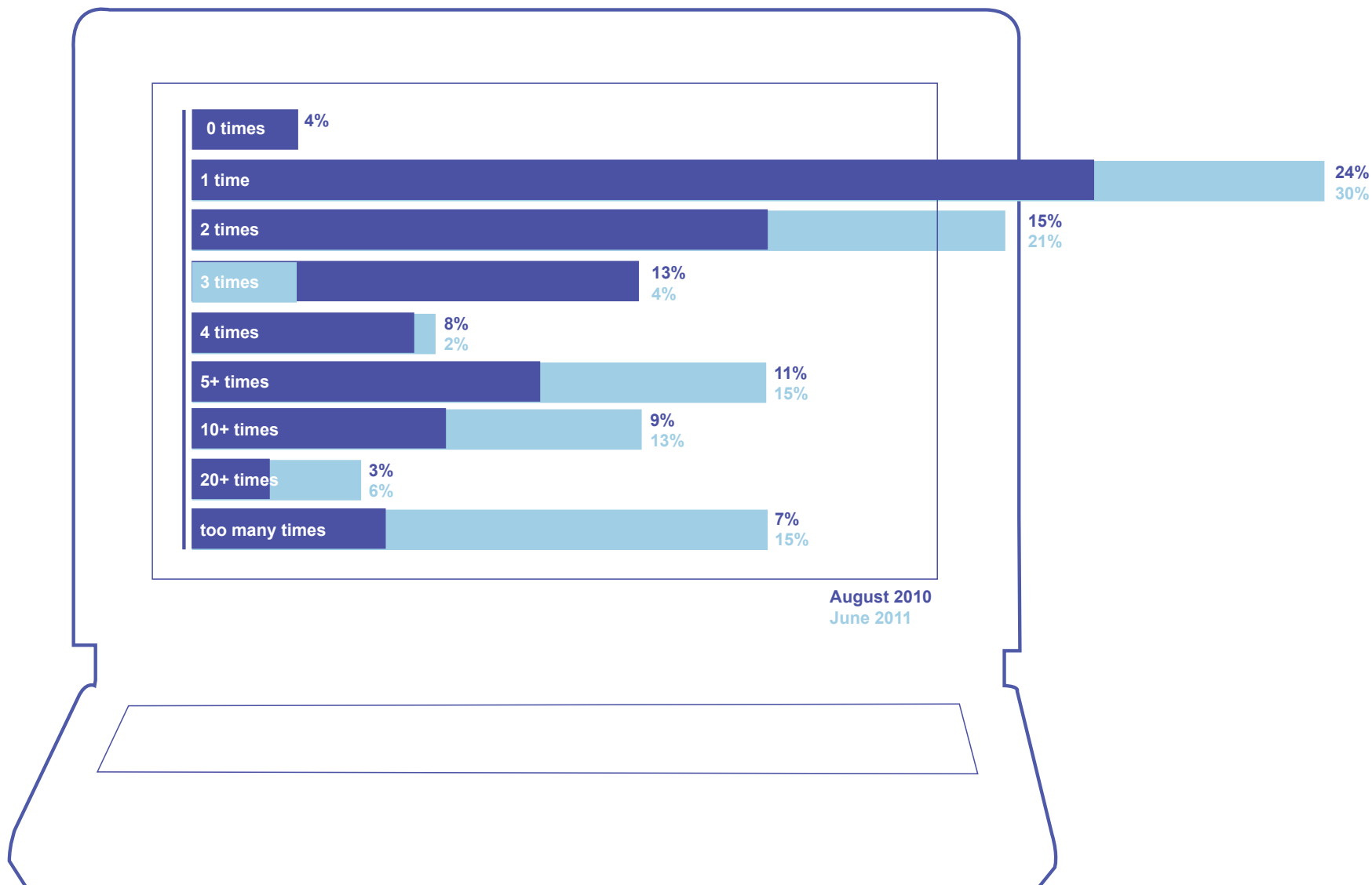


Fig.21 How often the students check Facebook (respondents chose 1 answer).

I am interested in the relationship between the amount of time spent on Facebook and the environment in which the students choose to use Facebook. Over 50% of the respondents checked Facebook between 1 and 3 times a day (see fig.21), and 25% checked between 5 and 20 times a day. The questionnaire allowed for open responses to this question and the answer “too many” was a significant response, with 6% in August rising to 15% in June 2011. This way of describing an overuse of Facebook is also a theme from my Facebook Friends and is explored in more detail in Ying’s and Josie’s stories. The increase in the amount of times the students checked their Facebook from August to June, to me, is not surprising. The students say that Facebook is integrated into university life and there is ubiquitous access to the site. This is not the case in August when they are living at home and working regular jobs.

The predominant choice of device for checking Facebook was the laptop (see fig.22). The next most popular device was the mobile phone. These findings are replicated in the data from the participants of the ethnography. They all use Facebook when out and about on their smart phones and on their laptops when in halls. The graphic (fig.22) shows the prominence of the devices and also that they are not used exclusively but alongside each other, interchangeably. When answering the questionnaire, the respondents could select more than one device that they checked Facebook on over the duration of the day. This is important as it shows the interconnected, layered nature of Facebook use within university.

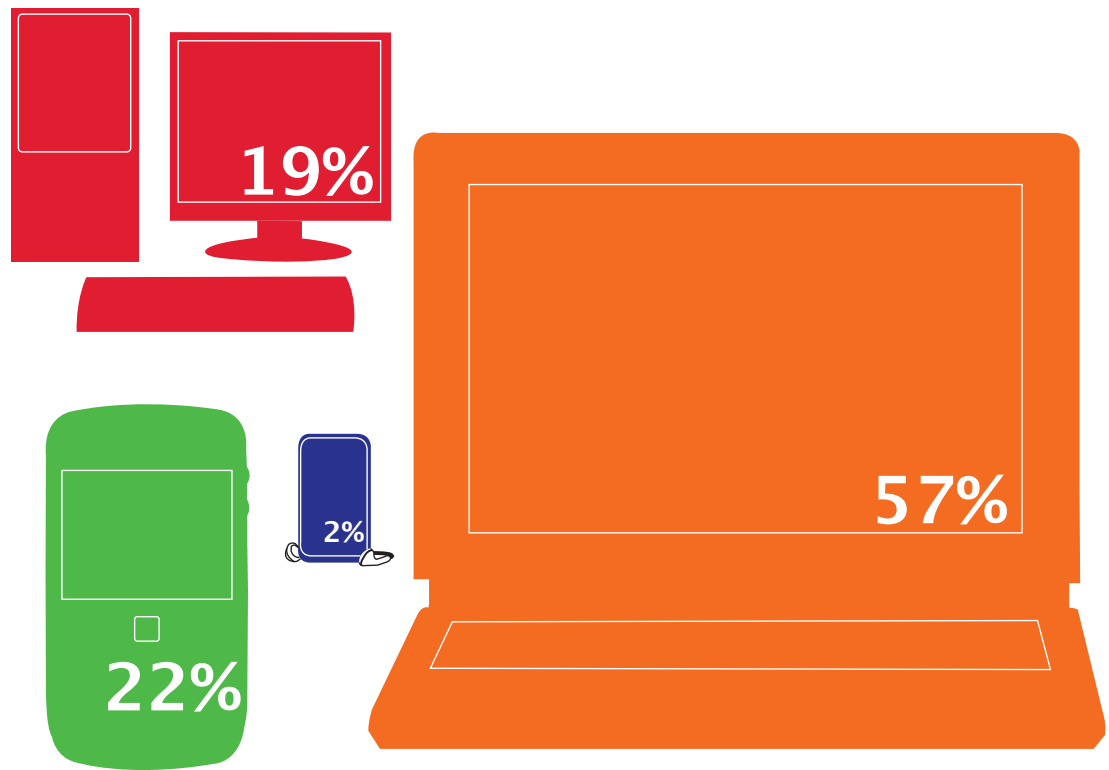


Fig.22 On what device the students checked Facebook (respondents could select more than 1 device).

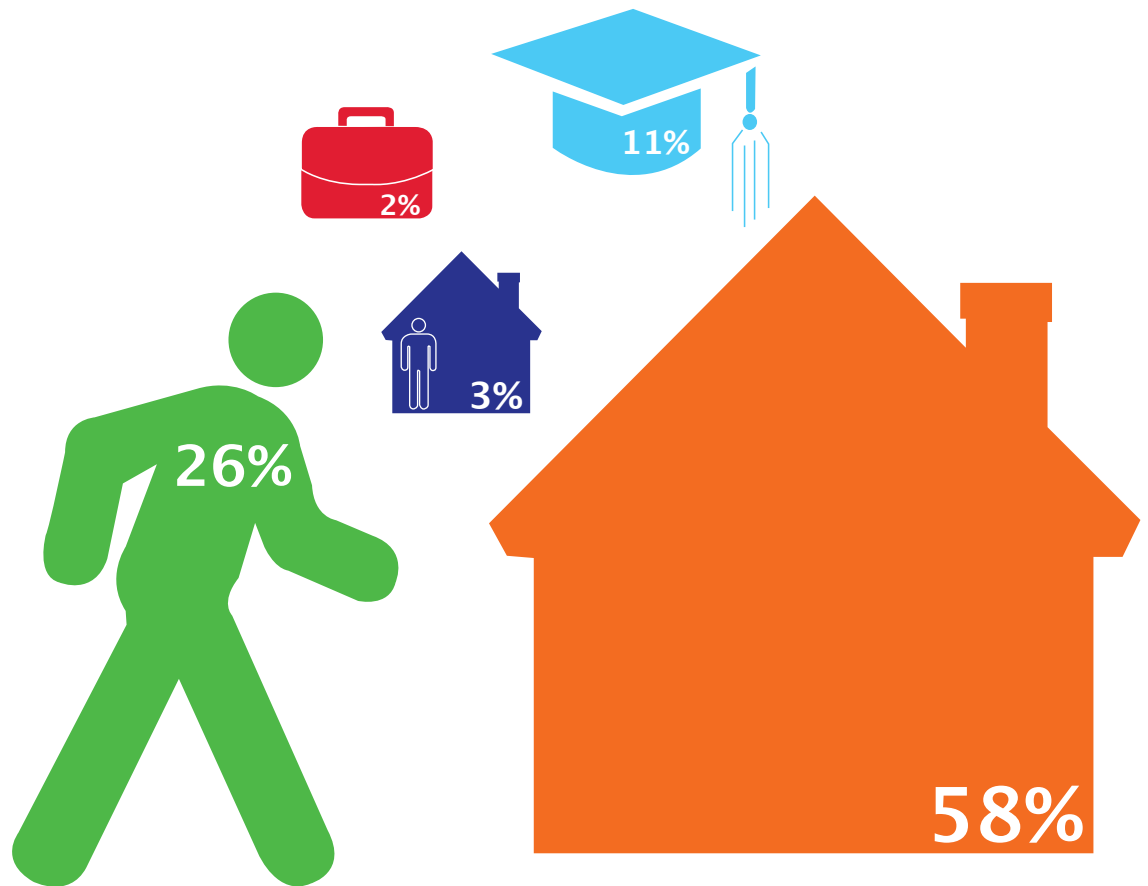


Fig.23 Where the students were when they checked Facebook? (only 1 choice allowed).

Home was the prominent location for checking Facebook (see fig.23). Students spend their time between where they live, being in lectures, socialising, work and travelling between these. These findings are replicated by the ethnographic participants who describe using Facebook “all the time”: on their laptops when they wake in the morning; on their way walking to lectures; in lectures; in between lectures and in the evenings while studying. Again, the diagram aims to show that these locations for checking Facebook are used interchangeably.



Fig.24 Why the students used Facebook.

The main reason for checking Facebook was for the respondents to look at their News Feed, followed by checking their Messages, writing on someone's Wall and to go on Facebook Chat (see fig.24). This question allowed for multiple activities to be selected. This was replicated in the data from the interviews I undertook with my ethnographic participants. Ying and Sally described, *"staring at the News Feed, waiting for it to update"* as a regular activity on Facebook. Again, these activities were not linear. The students undertook a range of these as part of any one visit to Facebook.

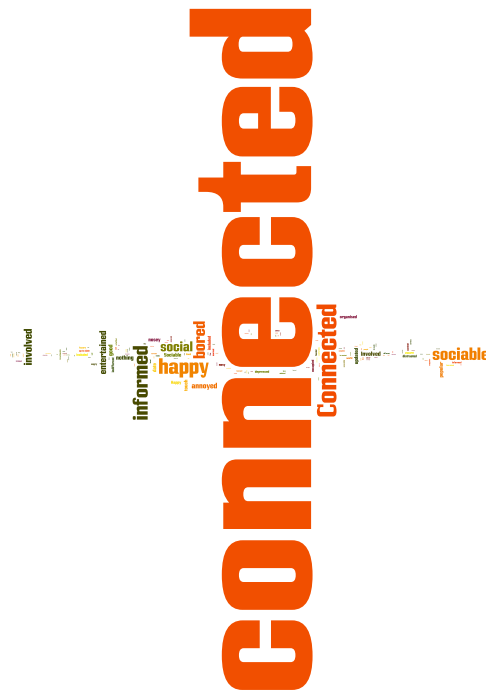


Fig.25 Facebook makes me feel... Wordle responses.

Facebook makes the students feel connected. This can be seen in the size of the text in the Wordle (see fig.25). Facebook's company tag line is "connecting people" and it could be said that this may be influential to the participants' responses in light of its overwhelming prominence. The theme of connectivity is also a prominent theme in the ethnographic data, which I discuss in the Facebook Friends sections. The participants of the ethnography all discussed feelings of "connectedness" through Facebook, to their friends, university societies, home life, family and social life (to name a few). Facebook is seen as the go to place to contact and keep in touch with friends (see fig.26, over). This supports my previous findings (Stirling, 2009) that students use Facebook as their main communication channel, which is replicated in Kirschner & Karpinski's (2010) findings suggesting that "Facebook is not a separate activity" (p.1241) in the lives of the student participants in their research.



Fig.26 because... Wordle responses.

Change in use; a Fresher no more?

The differences in questionnaire responses between August 2010 and 2011 are minimal. Of note and worth discussing here is that there was a general rise in the frequency of Facebook checking from August 2010 to June 2011, with 50% of respondents checking between 5 and 20 times per day.

What does the Facebook landscape look like?

This section has detailed the feelings of the respondents of the digital questionnaire in relation to Facebook and their usage of it. The findings show the participants feel “connected” by their Facebook use and are excited by being connected to people and their friends. A very large proportion used Facebook daily and checked it at least four times a day. They used a laptop or mobile phone to check and checked most often at home or on the move. When they checked, they looked at their News Feed, checked their Messages and wrote on their Friends’ Walls.

Strong themes coming from the data are people, friends and interactivity. Facebook use was not a solitary activity, rather it was used to respond to or provoke an interaction. Grammatical actions of Liking, Commenting and Posting were methods of interaction with people that the students already knew.

These themes are discussed further in the following Facebook Friends' stories section.

My Facebook Friends (FbF)
A longitudinal ethnographic study

Case study descriptions

There were six participants who took part in the more detailed ethnography and these are my “Facebook Friends”: Ruth, Josie, Tomas, Sally, Mike and Ying. It is their experiences and stories I use in this section to illustrate the themes presented on the infographic at the start of this chapter: making friends; administration; disconnection; managing friends; academic study; and procrastination and play. I begin this section with case descriptions of each of the participants to give a snapshot view of each person and how they use Facebook. I also include a case description of one of my Friend’s Facebook Groups as this features in one of the stories later in this section. As I was intrinsically involved in this ethnography, I also provide a description of my own Facebook use. Three tables then follow to allow a comparison of my FbF. The first (fig.27) details their responses to the initial questionnaire that was sent out, the second (fig.28) compares how many times they updated their Facebook Status over the year and the third (fig.29) shows how many Facebook Friends they had at the start and end of the study.

Ruth is female, 18 and a home student, living in university halls in the student village. She is studying for an MSc in Chemistry, which includes a year abroad. She uses Facebook to check her News Feed, write on other peoples’ walls, check her Inbox and Like things. “Crazy stalkers” on Facebook worry her.

Josie is female, 20, a home student living in private halls of residence in the city centre. Studying for a joint honours degree in Music and German. She is a singer and is involved with many extra curricular activities and societies. She uses Facebook to get conversations going or chase up things she is organising. She finds people have too many email addresses so Facebook is much easier to communicate with a group.

Tomas is male, 19 years old, an international student with high academic expectations of university. He is studying for a dual honours degree in Psychology and Philosophy. He uses Facebook to check his News Feed and post interesting links. He says Facebook is the best way to connect and find other people, as nearly everyone has a Facebook account. He is concerned about Facebook as he feels that people satisfy their need to share in the virtual space and, therefore, feel less need to communicate in the real world.

Sally is female, 19 and a home student, living in university halls in the student village. She is studying Psychology. She uses Facebook to check her News Feed, look at her own Profile, to upload Photos and check her Inbox. She likes Facebook when there are interesting Notifications from her Friends.

Mike is male, 19, a first year student, studying for an MComp in Computer Science with Mathematics. His interests include Maths, programming and gaming, leading him to run a gaming news/opinion site. Mike believes he mostly uses Facebook to keep up to date on what his Friends are up to, and to publicise any writing he does around the web. He likes Facebook as it is a free way to chat. He also has a Twitter account, which he has linked to his Facebook.

Ying is a female, 20 year old international student, living in university halls in the student village. She is in her second year studying Mechanical Engineering but it is her first year at this university. She uses Facebook to look at her News Feed. At the start of the year, she was not interested in using Facebook and was worried about the privacy of her data.

CS Group

“This group is where we rant about terrible lectures, rant about or make bad course related jokes or talk about the assignments”

CS Group is a private Facebook Group set up by some first-year students on a course and every student of that year is a member (n=80). It is a new group type (in 2010), which allows for synchronous group discussions.

Eve

Eve is female, 32, a home student, living at home. She uses Facebook as part of her research but also to keep in contact with her many Friends across the world. She checks her News Feed, uploads Photos and also Likes Pages on education and design. She finds Facebook a necessary evil. It takes up lots of her time but her insider position requires this.

FbF NAME	Facebook makes me feel....?	because...	Member of Facebook for?	Checked Facebook yesterday?
Ruth	connected	<i>I can connect to all of my Friends with just a click</i>	2 years	2 times
Josie	in touch	<i>it's a speedy way of keeping acquaintances and contacts alive without too much time commitment</i>	3 years	1 time
Tomas	shallow	<i>as far as I use it, it only deals with superficial communication and media; it doesn't offer live, in-depth communication opportunities either with my friends or acquaintances</i>	1 year	4 times
Sally	connected	<i>you can check up on people you know all round the world and keep in touch with such ease</i>	3 years	10 times
Mike	distracted	<i>it stops me doing any work I need to do</i>	3 years	too many times
Ying	bored	<i>I do not understand why people are addicted to it?</i>	This is my first year of being a member of Facebook	I didn't
Eve	informed	<i>I can see what all my Friends are doing when they Post pictures of their lives</i>	3 years	15 times

Fig.27 My FbF responses to the initial questionnaire.

To give a comparison of how often my FbF update their Status, the following table (fig.28) shows, by semester, how many updates each has made.

	Semester 1	Semester 2
Ruth	89	78
Josie	230	450
Tomas	41	N/A
Sally	35	45
Mike	435	589
Ying	70	130

Fig.28 How many Status updates each FbF has over sem. 1 & sem. 2.

To give a comparison of how many Friends my FbF had throughout the study, the following table (fig.29) shows the numbers at the start and end.

	Start of study	End of study
Ruth	348	389
Josie	640	690
Tomas	152	153
Sally	411	477
Mike	368	461
Ying	265	375

Fig.29 No. of Facebook Friends at start and end of the study.

Mike and Josie are heavy content creators, whereas Tomas and Sally post less. This tells me that one user explicitly interacts more than another but does not mean they are “on Facebook” any less. The number of Friends added over the year varied between one and over one hundred.

This was a short introduction to my FbF using their responses to the initial contextual questionnaire and an overview of their posting habits over the year. I do not view them as this one-dimensional presentation may suggest.

The following stories are written using a mixture of data, which includes; direct quotes from the face-to-face interviews, direct copies of Facebook Status updates and Facebook

Comments or other interactions, such as Likes and Events (see the full description of data presentation and analysis in Chapter 3). Each of the diary entries was a different piece of data. The frequency of diary entries directly correlates with the frequency of that person's Facebook posting over the academic year (as shown above). They tell the story of the direct lives of the participants and are ordered according to the themes of the section. The sections each focus on a particular theme in the data, which I have found: section 1 - making friends; section 2 – administration; section 3 – disconnection; section 4 - managing friends; section 5 - academic study; and section 6 - procrastination and play. Attributing a theme to a person is a device I chose to help me structure the work and present the data. These are presented with the overarching meta-theme of time. The six cases are presented thematically in a time-based presentation as shown in the previous illustration (see fig.19). These are six case studies across time. The seventh and final case is my story, in which I focus on the theme of Facebook as a research tool.

MY FACEBOOK FRIENDS' (FbF) STORIES

The stories of my FbF cover the six themes of analysis, which are: Making friends, Administration, Disconnection, Managing friends, Academic study, and Procrastination and Play. Each ethnographic story follows a specific time period of the academic year (see fig.30). These relate to the infographic timeline of the academic year (see p.102). These stories are the six individual participants' voices. These accumulate to one story; the story of my Facebook Friends (FbF).

Themes of each section:

FbF	Section	Key themes
Ruth	Making friends	Finding my place Meeting Facebook-to-Facebook Meeting face-to-face
Josie	Administration	This uni is run on Facebook Societies, lectures and watching TV I'm always on
Tomas	Disconnection	Disengagement I don't want to chat now I'm so bored
Sally	Managing friends	What's a Facebook friend? Managing friends and access Scales of friends (near and far)
Mike	Academic study	Help I've only written 700/1500! We use Facebook in lectures, of course!
Ying	Procrastination and play	Socially connected play Procrastinating on Facebook? Yes, quite a lot!

Fig.30 My FbF and the themes of each section.

Key Dates:

FbF	Dates	University
Ruth	August 19 th - September 26 th 2010	pre-enrolment
Josie	September 27 th - December 17 th 2010	semester 1
Tomas	December 18 th 2010 - February 6 th 2011	semester 1 exam period
Sally	February 7 th - May 2 nd 2011	semester 2
Mike	February 7 th - May 2 nd 2011	semester 2
Ying	May 3 rd - June 10 th 2011	semester 2 exam period

Fig.31 The key dates over the academic year and which FbF is attributed to them.

The university in question runs two fifteen-week semesters, which are organised as follows:

Autumn semester - 12 weeks

Christmas vacation - 4 weeks

3 weeks

Spring semester - 8 weeks

Easter semester - 3 weeks

7 weeks

The following stories are made up of verbatim quotes from interviews and Facebook statuses; please refer back to the data presentation section in the Methodology Chapter p.80 for a detailed explanation of this method. The aim is to privilege the participants' words (Frost, 2009).



Ruth's story - Making friends in the digital

“Hello. I’m guessing you’re going Northam? Gonville? x”

This is Ruth’s story of the time between getting her A-level results, gaining her place at university and her first week at university. Facebook played a key role in Ruth being able to contact the people she was going to share her halls of residence flat with for the first year at university. It illustrates her experiences of the themes of this section: “finding my place”, “meeting Facebook-to-Facebook” and “meeting face-to-face”.

19th August 2010

I can’t sleep, I’m too nervous. It’s 01.17 and I’ve just posted to Facebook that I can’t decide if I want tomorrow to come or not? Do I really want to know my A-level results and whether I have a place to study at the University of Northam? I wonder who else is awake feeling like this? Stressful! Daniel Likes my Status, he must be awake too!

Oh nice one, an unhelpful comment to “man up”. I CAN’T. Try waiting for an email that’s going to affect your whole life. :\$

1.41.

Ah that’s better, a comforting email, saying I’ll do great :) I really hope so.

1.57.

Sleep.

YAY!!!! My place at The University of Northam () to study Chemistry with Study in America (4 years) has been confirmed by UCAS! I have no idea what exam results I got, as the school doesn’t let us know until 10am. But they must be good for Northam to accept me!!!!

08.43.

I'm SO EXCITED!!!! My mum and dad are over the moon! I'm busy on Facebook checking to see how everyone else did. I comment on friends' Walls and reply to their comments on my Status update. Another friend from school is also going to Northam - yay! We all want to know now what results we got for each subject. Off to school it is.

09.31.

I got my results and they are better than I expected, great news. Tonight we'll go out and celebrate with all the guys from school. I've just added University of Northam to my Facebook Profile - eeeeek! And managed to find a few people who are doing Chemistry at Northam via the university Fresher's Facebook Page. It will be good to find some people who are living where I am. I'm not sure where that is yet though as I haven't been sent my accommodation email yet.

26th August 2010

I'm in Marsh Village Gonville B2 room 4. I've been searching all day on the university Fresher's Facebook group and I've also found a group for Gonville. And there I've found one of my housemates! A girl called Laura! I've added her as a friend so we can chat on Facebook Chat.

I'm working 6 days a week at the moment at JJB, it's hard work and particularly dull, but at least it earns me some money for going to uni. I really can't wait! I was talking to one of the girls I'm sharing the flat with last night on Messages. She seems lovely and we talked about our lives, whether we're in a relationship, what we're studying, where we're going on holiday, stuff like that. I also looked at her Photos, she looks a right laugh!

8th September 2010

I've made friends with one of the boys who lives in flat B1, I guess near our flat? I've added loads of other people from Gonville and the uni generally, so I'll know loads of

people when I start. I've been stalking them every evening after work, looking through all their Photos and Wall postings and chatting to some of them on Chat too. It's going to be ace when I get there. They all seem really normal and like I'll get on with them.

12th September 2010

Only a week to go! We've found another flat mate! Last night the 3 of us talked for about 4 or 5 hours and made loads of plans for being at uni. We're all sorted for Fresher's week, all the tickets are bought. We're going to the Beach Party!!!

Event notification: Northam Students' Union Gonville Beach Party. Attending.

18th September 2010

I'm so not worried about going to uni tomorrow. We're going to leave here really early so I get there between 9 and 10. Eeeeeek! So excited I've met loads of people already so I've got a good starting point from Facebook to talk to people. I wonder how the other girl in our flat feels? The one who we haven't managed to find yet.

19th September 2010

I've arrived, B2 is just as I had expected from seeing the photos of it on the website. All my flatmates were there when I arrived, luckily the last girl, who we hadn't met, got here really early. She said she did feel a bit out of it all, cos we all knew each other and she was like, "yeah, I've never met you before".

22 September at 20:51

RECENT ACTIVITY Ruth Lawrence was tagged in Laura Jones' album. Fresher's Shenanigans

23rd September 2010

I actually love this place :D

7 people like this.

25th September 2010 01:45

We had a lovely late night bonding session with Rebecca Hendry, randomly interrupted by Paul Brown attempting to reach our first floor window while wearing a superhero outfit... Gotta love fresher's!

26th September 2010

Luckily in Fresher's week there were 4 of us who went out the most and the girl we hadn't met on Facebook was one of them, so now it's like Facebook doesn't make any difference but it did the first couple of days I think.

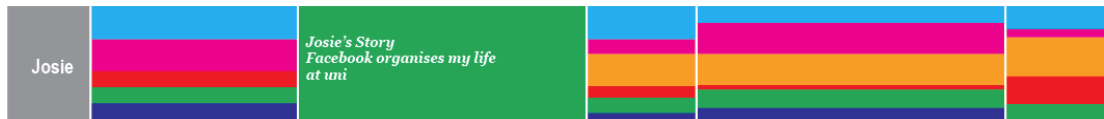
RECENT ACTIVITY

Freshers Shenanigans 4 new photos

Ruth is now friends with Pete Undercliffe and 8 other people.

Ruth updated her current location to Northam.

I discuss Ruth's story in Chapter 5 (p.157), under the themes of: "finding my place", "meeting Facebook-to-Facebook" and "meeting face-to-face".



Josie's story - Facebook organises my life at uni

“this uni is run on Facebook”.

This is Josie's story of her first semester at university and how Facebook is intertwined with and helps her organise her life at university. It illustrates her experiences of the themes of this section: "this uni is run on Facebook", "societies, lectures and watching tv" and "I'm always on".

RECENT ACTIVITY

Josie updated her current location to Northam.

27th September 2010

OWW! Uni Lesson Number One - No one tells you anything... Taadaa: German Seminar at 9 tomorrow morning...

Oooh look... 8 hours away! Loads of notice! Oh and that there is set reading for Intro Lectures? Lecture 2 fine! But if you're gonna do that ...NOTICE... Really feeling reading 3 Intros to Music Psychology at 2 in the morning...

01.46

Luckily some new classmates I'd met in Fresher's week read that status update and they said apparently that reading is for AFTER the lecture...

Sleep.

28th September 2010

First classes over, not too painful. Here come the auditions...so much to fit in this week and I'm off to watch IronMan 2 with the Film Unit later.

RECENT ACTIVITY

Josie attended Film Unit Presents: IronMan2.

29th September 2010

Life is MAAAAANNNNNNIC! So many random commitments already, I'm in the pantomime as the evil stepmother (and the mother of my bf!!) and the chamber choir. The singing society and light entertainment society should be fun. I'll get on the committees hopefully. I've joined the University of Northam Music department page for updates on the course. More auditions later and exploring around the city me thinks.

RECENT ACTIVITY

Josie likes Music (University of Northam).

2nd October 2010

I made it into Northam Cathedral Girls choir... :)

5th October 2010

Ergh, Fresher's flu has struck and it's my first singing lesson of the year and I'm busy between 9am-10pm today. Sigh... I've put all my deadlines and exam deadlines into my diary...mild hysteria is ensuing. Lets see if I can manage to keep all these commitments today... :/

8th October 2010

I nearly missed out on a Music social 'cos I didn't get the Event invite :(I've joined the Group now so I won't miss anymore. What a fab night, the music crew are ace, so glad I went.

RECENT ACTIVITY

Josie is attending Moooosic social.

I'm invited to a friend's 20th birthday flat party at the weekend, which will be fun as long as I can fit the party in after the pantomime rehearsal and the three pieces of coursework I have to do before Monday.

23rd October 2010

In my role as the dual honours music rep, I'm asking folk if they have any gripes or happiness to share with me before the next rep meeting. I hear from people who are

studying Music alongside another subject. There are quite a few of us and it's not been an easy semester so far. People have Messaged me some issues about timetabling, the departments I work with are terrible at informing us about when things change. Plus I have a really nasty timetable (and I'm sure I'm not alone), with one day that is 9 til 4 so I don't always get to know what's going on. We're lucky 'cos we can use Facebook to find out when things are cancelled and when things have been moved, from other students' postings. But it shouldn't be like that. I'll bring it up at the rep meeting.

8th November 2010

The organiser of the pantomime contacts me via a Wall post on Facebook and links the new script for me to read and print out. It looks fantastic; I'm really excited about this part. She also checks I can attend the sketch rehearsal next week.

Anything to do with a society is done on Facebook, I'm committee member of a couple and I'd really struggle without it.

10th November 2010

*It's freezing here and I wish I was at home. I've managed to convinced myself that the German Essay was due in next Friday but oh my god! It's not!! It's TOMORROW!!!
Aaaaah... I post a Status update and I get some comforting words from my bf and classmates.*

Noooooooooooooooooo! You'll be ok Josie.

Shit :(Good luck!

Want some help?... xx

11th November 2010

The Moooosic social! It's away day tomorrow and we've planned via Facebook to all go out tonight, the hangovers will be hilarious! And I need it after that stupid German essay.

14th November 2010

I had a lovely trip to Tesco's with Ellen and must now knuckle down to a German essay, sound and science poster, vocab learning, Faserland and a reading.

15th November 2010

Helen (the music rep) and I are using Facebook to gather peoples' thoughts on the postgrad room in the music department becoming a computer room. I asked them via uni email, but no-one ever reads that so a Status update on Facebook will get more people to reply. I had 30 Messages via Facebook message so that will be good to feedback at the reps meeting.

17th November 2010

Singsoc society Event notification: SingSoc presents... Pop Night in Concert! Attending.

I'm going to be singing A Ceremony of Carols a week on Sunday with solo! :D

19th November 2010

Rachel invited me to see the new Harry Potter film tonight by tagging me in a Facebook Status update. Harry Potter.... Ahhhhhhh.....

24th November 2010

The lecturers are going to strike, I muse on whether to walk out of uni tomorrow or to go to lectures... Hmmm....

00.15

A friend suggests walking out, as the first year doesn't count.

00.20

Another friend suggests we should boycott as we've only got composition.

I have five lectures, so it's not as easy as that.

30th November 2010

SNOW!!!! Everywhere! It's so deep, I see by looking out of my window while I'm still in bed. I check Facebook on my Blackberry mobile phone to find the Status updates' of friends asking whether lectures are cancelled? I check my uni email, I have it sent direct to my Blackberry.

All lectures cancelled and uni closed!

I update my Status accordingly and then roll over to catch up on some much needed sleep.

1st December 2010

My music lecturer has posted an interesting link on Facebook, definitely worth a look. It's nearly the end of semester one and I'm feeling like I'm getting the hang of this uni life. I like that we have a more informal connection with some of the members of staff and I'm more likely to look at a Facebook link than if it was emailed to me at my uni email account. There is so much spam there. I can't always be bothered to check it properly. No-one bothers to email, all my band rehearsals, all my choir rehearsals, meeting up with people to work, all of that, it's done through Facebook.

I discuss Josie's story in Chapter 5 (p.165), under these three headings: "this uni is run on Facebook"; "societies, lectures and watching tv" and "I'm always on".



Tomas's story - Disconnection: I don't want to be "here" anymore

"I should be studying. Studying is important and I need to focus all my attention on it"

Tomas's story is somewhat different to the other participants in this study. He did not stay the whole year at The University of Northam. He interacted on Facebook much less than the other participants (see fig.21) and used the site differently. This is Tomas's story of the end of semester one and the exam period therein. It tells of the feelings of disconnection in relation to the use of Facebook but also to university life. The story illustrates his experiences of the themes of this section: Disengagement, "I don't want to chat now" and "I'm so bored".

27th November

Tomas likes The University of Northam (Education).

There is something so arbitrary about "liking" someone's comments. It's so superficial, you press the like button and that's it. I mean you don't have to think about it.

8th December 2010

I would really like to be at a different university. I don't fit in here. I have an interview for another university.

I find the workload here too light and it's not meaningful or productive. The cultural adaptation I found very difficult. I find I cannot really talk personally with a British person, they don't really want to know how you are. I think the youth of Britain are very conformative, they always go in groups and don't have personalities. I think the internet and social networks trivialises communication and makes people have an illusionary view of themselves.

I find Facebook a very superficial form of communication.

18th December 2010

Tomas attended TEDPrize@UN LIVE Webcast.

Tomas commented on Vlada's link.

Tomas likes The INK Conference (Communications).

20th December 2010

Back home, seeing my family and real friends. The people I have met on my course and in Northam are great but it's not like they can be my real friends after such a short period of time.

12th January 2011

I'm using Facebook much less as I've had direct contact, meeting up with my good friends from home.

17th January 2011

I never post a status update to say what I'm doing. I don't use it to share how I feel. Instead to share other information that they might find interesting, like political things.

I like to upload my art photography so people can give me feedback. I like the idea that people can enjoy something that I did. The feedback is a good thing, not related to self-esteem.

30th January 2011

I want to meet the people in Middlewood University as real before I add them on Facebook. I mean, how could you make friends on Facebook before meeting them? I want to make friends for them, because I like them and we have things in common, not just for having something on my Facebook Wall.

6th February 2011

Facebook is a very powerful communication tool, I can know people I wouldn't be able to contact in other ways, many people. I use it to communicate with a few friends who use it too. It's not about my personality or identity. Sometimes even for work related things but not for serious things. I don't have anything against Facebook it's just that it cannot be

everything, everywhere. Certain things work really well, feedback from friends for example when they comment on my photos. What I don't like is that it dominates everywhere.

18th February 2011

Tomas deactivated his Facebook account.

I discuss Tomas's story in Chapter 5 (p.171), under these three headings: "Disengagement", "I don't want to chat now" and "I'm so bored".



Sally's story - Facebook connects me to all my friends

“I wouldn’t go, “oh, I’m friends with them because I’ve got them on Facebook””

This is Sally’s story of her second semester at university and how she uses Facebook to connect with and manage all her different groups of friends: The old “home” friends; the new “uni academic” friends and the new “uni social” friends. Facebook and the term Friends are intertwined. New understandings of the term are emerging. The story illustrates her experiences of the themes of this section: “what’s a Facebook friend?”, “managing friends and access” and “scales of friends (near and far)”.

3rd February 2011

I’m in a lecture and I check Facebook on my phone before the lecture starts. No notifications. My friends from home are usually quite good at sending me the odd message, I got one yesterday and it was nice, just like a little, hello.

RECENT ACTIVITY

Sally changed her Profile picture.

Sally Gordon was tagged in her own album.

16th February 2011

Notifications, 8. Friend request, 1.

I try to make it that people can’t see anything on mine if they’re not my friend. I’m not friends with someone until someone adds me. I do get snobby about adding people sometimes. I’m quite interested to see how I meet people over the next few years, I’m like “well surely this is the main time of meeting people is my university course?”

One of my friends has decided to drop out of uni. She’s like “I’m not really enjoying the course, my flat-mates don’t want to go out, they all just shut themselves in their room” and I was just like “that’s horrible”. I’m so glad we get on as a flat, I’m sure it didn’t make much difference that we made friends on Facebook before we met?

RECENT ACTIVITY

Sally Gordon added 72 new photos to the album "stickin' to the floor."

Sally Gordon was tagged in her own album.

4th March 2011

Last night one of my flat-mates and I made videos of our chins' as people. Eyes and nose drawn on the chin and then our mouth as the mouth. We recorded each other saying what food we liked, it was hilarious!

8th March 2011

Pancake day!

Enough pancake mix E4?! :)

PICTURE

RECENT ACTIVITY

Sally Gordon added 31 new photos to the album "stickin' to the floor."

Sally Gordon was tagged in Becca South's album.

Sally Gordon was tagged in Jane Green's album.

15th March 2011

I spoke to Beth on Skype for a catch up...yay! But that was an hour ago! Now I'm late for tea. Mark is cooking dinner and he'll be mad.

17th March 2011

Notifications, 6.

I must reply to Clara's message or she'll think I've forgotten about her. She sent it yesterday.

Me and my best friend use FB pretty regularly. All of my friends keep in contact but I'm a bit lazy I think, I know when we go back home we'll all just get on fine again, I don't make an effort. I realise sometime I haven't been in touch and I think FB is good for that as you can just send a quick Wall post.

My friend wrote on my wall in relation to me passing my exams, "yay you passed!"

I like hanging out with my flat-mates, my timetable works out that I'm out during the day when other people are in. It's just nice to relax, it's not like it's a chore, but it's not as easy as just sitting in the lounge and chatting and playing cards. So I think it is a bit of laziness. I really love my flatmates, and when everyone is there, you don't want to be like, ok I'll just go off now and phone my mates. I mean, you hear so much about people just spending the whole time in their rooms they really don't get on.

RECENT ACTIVITY

Sally Gordon was tagged in Clare Weller's album.

Sally Gordon was tagged in Tanya McDonald's album.

24th April 2011

Today I mostly did a bit of stalking, it is interesting to see what other people are up to. Profile pictures, I'll always have a scan through them. I don't go crazy.

RECENT ACTIVITY

Sally Gordon added 7 new photos to the album "stickin' to the floor."

Sally Gordon was tagged in her own album.

30th April 2011

I don't have different settings for different friends apart from I have a group on Chat for people that I talk to, otherwise there's this massive list and I can't see everyone. Otherwise there are at peak time, probably 50 max, some people in my flat will have about one hundred people – I don't understand that! Yeah maybe up to 60/70 occasionally. On an average day twenty/thirty? At a normal time, not even thirty or anything. Probably a maximum of three? Most of the time even less, one or two. I guess it makes you look a bit popular if you've got all these going on? I don't really get it?

I'd like to know more people from my course, but then even so I still don't know how I'd go about like talking to them. I think it would like that but there's a girl on my block that does Psychology, she deleted me the other day.

I was like “whoa”.

Peoples’ privacy settings can be odd. A lot of my uni friends have it set up so my friends from home can’t see the photos I’ve been tagged in as the don’t have “friends of friends” setting. So I have the “North to the ham album” to re-upload the photos, I think my friends in Northam must think I’m a bit weird?

1st May 2011

I mean I’m sure most of the people that pop up on my Facebook wall are probably my friends, so it’s nice it’s there. I was thinking how much my friends changed and so much of my Newsfeed is people from Northam now, rather than that much of a mixture. I could happily delete quite a few people from home I reckon. A person I don’t like came up in my Newsfeed the other day and I thought, “why don’t you just delete her?” but I can’t just delete her. I don’t really like her but I want to know what she’s up to. I’m just not that close to her. Yeah I think my friends are a select few still. I’m not one of those people that wants to be friends with everyone either, like I don’t mind, I’d rather have a few really, really close friends like.

RECENT ACTIVITY

Sally likes Northam Students' Union. Like this Page

"thanks for having this for two..." on Ben Jame's photo.

Sally likes University of Northam Students' Union Fresher's/Intro.

Sally is now friends with Rina Abdulah and Rob Stephenson.

Sally Gordon was tagged in her own photo.

I’m shocked if people have more than like one thousand friends, I’m like, how is that possible? I think I’m in the four hundreds, but I’m not sure? I’m sure that’s too many for who I actually care about, there’s no way, I’ll probably have forgotten I’ve got some of them. Two to three hundred mark, it does depend on what sort of person you are, some people are like “oh yeah I like them, whatever” and some people are like “I don’t really know you so I’ll ignore”.

Sally’s story is discussed in Chapter 5 (p.179), under these three headings: what’s a Facebook friend?”, “managing friends and access” and “scales of friends (near and far)”.



Mike's story - Using Facebook for academic study

“most of us didn't really have a clue what we were doing so it was a case of writing on the Wall what we didn't understand and everyone helped out”

This is Mike's story of his second semester at university and this focuses on how he uses Facebook to support his academic study. Facebook offers a Group function, whereby many people can all share a private space within Facebook. The story illustrates his experiences of the themes of this section: “Help I've only written 700/1500!” and “We use Facebook in lectures, of course!”

15th February 2011

08.50

I post “Well this is weird. I'm 10 minutes early for my first lecture of the day?”

08.51

That is MADNESS! A friend replies

08.52

THIS NEVER HAPPENS I respond

10.52

I post “Isn't life wonderful? I am convinced my MA673 lecturer is insane”

15.42

I just discovered why people struggled with CM100A. I understood this in M104 and I'm confused

Greg Smith likes this.

20:09

I get a post on my Wall

Peter Eddy

Should I bother coming to Interval at 10:30ish, or will you all be getting ready to head

back?

22:15

I reply "We were probably still there, but I had to go"

20.29

A friend posts

Talking to my friend before about the "Trapezium rule" and his only response was "Wait... i thought a trapezium was one of those things they swung on in circuses??", i thought you, being a maths genius, would find this mildly amusing, i certainly did.

I like this.

16th February 2011

10.02

I post

Oh thanks phone. It's not like I was using you for an alarm or anything.

You know, I had a lecture an hour ago and a tutorial now.

18th February 2011

10.08

I post

Sitting in the library for Assassin Sign ups, while doing random OSIX problems. I wonder if Java has an MD5 hash function...

19th February 2011

12.30

A friend posts on my wall

*How the hell have you spent years programming? i'm sat here doing my computing lab from next week so i can sleep instead of going to it and I can honestly say computing is tedious and soul destroying, my respect sir
is yours.*

12.32

I post

Because I learn the easy stuff then do fun things.

See the RobotMusic class.

12.39

He posts

im attempting to learn how to control MATLAB and its stupid user defined programming language

12.40

I post

Oooh, haven't touched MATLAB, but the trick to making programming fun is to think of something you'd want to do, and see if you can do it.

12.42

He posts

fair one, MATLAB is a glorified calculator which has evolved so that you can now use it to do simple simulations of mathematical models, its very depressing since i dont have any useful data to do something entertaining with

12.42

I post

Make it up. That's what all the physicists do

16.37

I post

To all website developers offering downloads. Please put the filesize of your downloads on the web page. Regards,

19.43

A friend posts

1186/1500 words done and I have nothing more to say on implementing emotions or consciousness in machines...

I like this.

The Computer Science group. Basically every member of the first year is a member of it and it's where we rant about terrible lectures, rant about or make bad computer science jokes or talk about the assignments.

A lecture

Chris Miller

Did anyone go to CM100B on tues?

Probably about 25 people i'd say, though i didn't really look, but he said "we have half numbers today", which implies 40

Alex Starling

Not like i missed anything i would have got from lurking facebook during the lecture.

Oliver James

the fact a thread on here can gain 100 comments during the course of a maths lecture leads me to believe it is pretty /b/tastic

Group

23.01

Mike Lily

Haven't asked for a while, anyone need a CM100B topic explaining?

23.07

Daniel Cox

to those of you still awake, i have a problem with my java basically i am writing the check. Winner and am currently checking vertically, but my code seems to think that red is the winner when there is 2 in a row 'vertically' and it is red's turn any ideas? or does someone want to take a look at that section of my code?

23.07

Pete Watson

how is it checking? pseudocode will do if afraid of COLLUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUSION

23.07

Brett O'Shea

I thought you we're a fearless bastard...

23.08

Oliver James

change the number 2 to 4

23.08

Oliver James

sorted innitttttt

23.09

Pete Watson

i am, doesn't mean everyone else is

23.10

Daniel Cox

any sensible helpers? please!

23.10

Oliver James

nah, it's too late for that, you're doomed.

23.10

Oliver James

and this isn't the group to expect sensible answers from.

23.12

Alex Starling

pm me your code, if i can't see it from a glance i'm going to bed

23.12

Pete Watson

*for(i innum rows){for(j innum cols){if(board[i][j]=board[i+1][j] and board[i+2][j] and board[i+3][j] and board[i][j] is not EMPTY){return winner (in some way) }}}*something like that?

23.13

Alex Starling

I couldn't spot it easily so goodnight people.

23.13

Pete Watson

NIGHT BABE XXXXXXXX !

23.14

Oliver James

night

23.17

Tim Evans

out of curiosity did you use a count throughout the program to know when the board was full, or just use a loop with board full? the count would be more efficient but i don't think it's what he wants?

45 replies

16.13

Peter Eddy

Btw if you have any questions (OFC without collusion :P) about the assignment, please shoot :) I'm so bored...

Mike's story is discussed in Chapter 5 (p.188), under these two headings: "Help I've only written 700/1500!" and "We use Facebook in lectures, of course!".



Ying's story - Procrastination and play

“STUDY, Y am I still in fb?”

This is Ying's story of the final exam period of the academic year at the end of semester two. This focuses on how she uses Facebook to play with her friends and for academic procrastination. Facebook offers a plethora of ways to “waste your time” over the academic year but this notion is particularly pertinent at exam time. Some students choose to disconnect altogether because of this (see also Tomas's story). The story illustrates her experiences of the themes of this section: “socially connected play” and “procrastinating on Facebook? Yes, quite a lot”.

30th April 2011

Exams are coming :(

I must study hard. My course is 100% exam so I must pass to continue next year.

1st May 2011

My friend has got rid of Facebook for exams, like a lot of other people I know. They have disabled it for a little while so they can't be distracted. My friend says if you've got a Facebook then you're not talking to people and doing random things when you should be working. I cannot imagine doing that! Although I do have a lot of study to do.

2nd May 2011

Over the year I have seen what I would describe as a “fraping” nation, that happens a lot! Not much to me, it happened really badly recently, I don't know if you happened to see the picture of the big naked man, that my friend put as my profile picture as a joke? I was so annoyed.

If I'm in someone's room and I realize I could frape them I just go blank. There was a funny thing I heard that you just add loads of friends to a persons profile. Because obviously you don't know you've added them until you accept really. Sneaky.

4th May 2011

I'm in no mood to study! 11 people like this status update. So lazy those ppl, why don't they bother to write a comment? Oh, I guess they would say they are too busy "studying".

RECENT ACTIVITY

Ying is playing Zuma Blitz. Like. Comment. Play Zuma Blitz

5th May 2011

"How can you have such a high score on zuma?!?! :P", my friend comments on my Wall. Other friends suggest I'm a hacker or a cheat! I'm not.

I like the comment.

I'm good by luck and plus I try really hard. I like the games on Facebook. I like gaming generally but particularly on Facebook as I'm strong at it. I'm always trying to be in the first three so I need to practice hard. I'm competitive with my Facebook friends as they recalculate the leader board every week and I try to win a medal and record the highest scores.

10th May 2011

I'm playing Zuma again. Beating my friend Jayden. He complains to me by commenting on my Wall that I beat him even when he gets his best score. He needs to practice more.

Jayden

why are you playing zuma again? always beating me even when I get my best score :P

Ying

mwahahaha...becos i like the feeling of beating u =P

Jayden

Haha it's ok I wasn't winning even when you weren't playing :p

Ying

hahaha...practise more!

Jayden

I already play a lot. I needed to use 3 powers to get my high score :(

Ying

mwahahahahaha..no powers for tht high score of mine!

Jayden

Oh no I need more practice :)

Ying

wahahaha~me too actually..i still cant get 1st 3 places

Jayden

Haha yeah you always beat me but don't have any gold medals, it's hard for me to get top 3 now

Ying

u can~~!

15th May 2011

07.20

Got up to play with my mum on Farmville, it takes about 30mins to harvest and plant new crops, send invites and gifts to friends and my mum. If I don't do it she'll be sad, but it's a good way to stay in touch with her and she likes the connection.

20th May 2011

My friend Jayden writes on my Wall.

thanks for the zuma fortune cookie! :D but i still can't beat your score :(

The game Zuma Blitz encourages me to keep playing against and with my Facebook friends by offering fortune cookies I can share with my friends. These give us a higher score. That is important as the person with the highest score is the winner.

20th May 2011

Exams are soon.

21st May 2011

zuma balls seemed to shoot out everything that i memorize into my mind...maybe i shud quit zuma...=P

29th May 2011

I ask my friends to help me with my revision.

"what is "AM-DSB CP"?!?!?! even uncle google couldn't define it!!"

Within 30 mins I get 23 comments from a range of my classmates, giving me the answer.

Thanks Facebook.

28th May 2011

This morning I cannot concentrate on my studies. I go to Facebook and I play Facebook games. Because I need to focus things, the games help me do this and then "yeah I'm awake now". That happens for like 2 or 3 days. I need to force myself to wake up. I sleep at midnight, I can't wake up for exam at 9, so I need to force myself and I just play games.

30th May 2011

31st May exam venue: Food court

=.= weird...

1st June 2011

I need a Facebook break from my studying. I'll just go on and play for the next 10 minutes

and then I continue again. I can't concentrate like 2 hours straight.

3rd June 2011

My friend writes on my Wall.

00.30

Helloooooooooooooo..i'm back on facebook=/ lol. need to study! byeeee! Xx

I like this to let her know I read it and I'm glad but I'm in the middle of studying so can't chat.

Later I go back and comment.

09.34

haha welcome back~ u going later? wanna go together?

She replies.

13.37

(: Yeah, am going later. But i be out studying, so i will go there later..

4th June 2011

I am invited to a friend's house for dinner.

i tmr only can tell u la..cos i have a study plan

ma..and if i manage to finish it by 6pm then i'll come lo...

6th June 2011

I personally think I have arranged my time well, I think so, but it's not been so stressful for me. I can...like normally people study at midnight and then they don't sleep til day before exam or something. I just go to sleep. I stop studying around 11 or 10.30 and then I just relax and then I just go to sleep, and the next day return and study and relax.

12th June 2011

My Facebook use has changed so much over this year. When we first met I didn't even bother to open Facebook. Like in the beginning I'll open it a few days for one thing and

then after that as the year goes on I'm so bored so I just open Facebook everything. Whenever I don't know what to do. Because Facebook is always there and people are sharing their videos, it's fun to look at those, so I just look at it. I spend more time than I should procrastinating on Facebook. Quite a lot.

Ying's story is discussed in Chapter 5 (p.194), under these two headings: "socially connected play" and "procrastinating on Facebook? Yes, quite a lot".

Eve's story – Facebook as a research tool

“Yes, I study Facebook”

This is my story of the academic year, in which I studied six students and how they used Facebook in their first year at university. Facebook was one of my research sites as well as being one of my research tools. The story illustrates my experiences of the themes of this section: “How do I observe Facebook?” and “All my Friends are here too”.

25th August 2010

I may be offline for sometime, see you very soon x

Off to Zanzibar. No electricity, let alone, Internet connection. No Facebook checking. My Google survey has had 354 respondents so far. I won't be able to monitor that. This was a stupid time to go on holiday to the middle of nowhere.

19th November

Mike writes on my Wall and apologises for leaving early last night.

RECENT ACTIVITY

Eve is now friends with Ruth Lawrence and 5 other people

27th November 2010

Mike commented on my status update.

27th November 2010

Changed my privacy settings.

16th December 2010

It really is taking over my life: fact.

Top Words app

My Top Words of 2010

Here are top words from my Facebook status messages!

1. Facebook – used 6 times

2. X – used 6 times
3. Sunny – used 5 times

11th January 2011

Facebook stop bullying me

My friend Pat asks what?

I reply – to change my profile to the new one

18th January 2011

ah, Facebook finally got me!

20th January 2011

Ying posted on my Wall

I'm not that addicted to fb =o!!

I reply

Hee hee! ^^

She replies

Not a valid research

I reply

Not true I'm sure ^^

22nd February

Whooop! Done it, I'm allowed to do a PhD proper now! Aaah, and relax, pass the wine...

15 people Like that comment and I get 11 comments

21st March

Facebook you're messing with my head

41 people Like this

My friend Pat asks "What's all this about adverts eve the facebook queen?! Is it a scam or are we meant to be blocking adverts in our settings??? X"

25th March

RECENT NOTIFICATION

Eve is friends with Oliver James

31st March 2011

My friend Ali posts a link on my Wall to an article entitled "What women really think about their Facebook friends" She comments "did you see this?"

14th June 2011

I post a link to the new browser Rockmelt with an exclamation of Argh!

Mike comments

What's wrong with Rockmelt? Silly Eve, are you getting distracted?

3rd July 2011

as of tomorrow I'm leaving here for a month, see you all in August. Have a fun filled July!

Xxx

You are like SO brave!

OMG!!!!!! You did it xxx

where to?

off FB!!!

3rd July – 1st September 2011

Facebook deactivated

1st September 2011

Faye Watson welcomes me back by posting on my Wall

17th September 2011

Hello! I'm back from my Facebook hiatus, missed you all of course. What did I miss?... You guys missed; some great netball matches, the decorating of the living room, Ben and Robin's wedding (but you probably saw that somewhere else), Margaret's hen do (but you probably saw that somewhere else too), lots of writing, camping, more writing, James and Sarah's wedding (ditto), more writing, conference stuff, a visit to aunty Jean, a sunny holiday, lots of veg from the garden...oh and we got engaged! Xxx

Josie Likes this

20th September 2011

Jess posts on my Wall

Hello! You're back on Facebook...does this mean data analysis has taken place?!

Hope you're well. :-)

Eve's story is discussed in Chapter 5 (p.200), under these two headings: "How do I observe Facebook?" and "All my Friends are here too".

Summary

This section has presented the data gathered from my year-long study of my participants. In Chapter 5, which follows, I discuss the findings that I have developed as a result of analysing this data and I present these in 6 sections, which mirror my FbF stories. I conclude with "a reflection on Facebook as a research site and research tool" which mirrors my own story.

I have chosen to present the data and findings in two separate chapters both governed by the temporal structure of the academic year, as, through my data collection and analysis, I have come to realise the importance of the interconnectivity of the relationships between time, university life and Facebook. Adam (1995) offers the view that through "daily educational practice", the "dominant temporal structures and norms of society are absorbed, maintained, re-created and changed" (p.59). There are two ways of viewing the relationship between time and Facebook. The first observes that Facebook reflects our obsession with time and the second is that time and Facebook impact on each other. Taking either of these viewpoints therefore means that the use of Facebook at university affects university life and the way it is experienced.

It is these daily practices, temporal structure and norms on Facebook that I have been exploring and I present in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5: A DISCUSSION OF THE DATA



“This year’s gone super quickly...it came to be a realisation that I was no longer going to be a Fresher”

Introduction

Following on from Chapter 4, the presentation of data and my FbF stories, this section details my discussion of this data, predominantly focusing on the FbF stories. Six themes of Facebook use by transitioning students were found. These analyses are based on the data presented in Chapter Three and my time spent in the field. I have presented these in seven sections, which mirror the data presentation sections. The themes of analysis are:

- Making friends
- Administration
- Disconnection
- Managing friends
- Academic study
- Procrastination and play.

And the final, seventh theme explores my own interaction with Facebook as a research site and research tool.

At this point, it is useful to look back at the infographic overview of these themes (see fig.19, p.102). Take forward from that the fact that the infographic illustrates the manner in which the themes overlap across the different FbF stories. While the discussion develops around each of themes and issues, the meta-themes of Time and Social, structure each one.

Meta-themes: Time & Social support

The importance of the interconnectivity of the relationships between time, university life and Facebook is the focus of much of the discussion. It can be seen in the data that undergraduates are concerned with time and how to spend their time and Facebook reflects this concern. Life at university is rigid; structured by the academic years, the semesters and the weekly timetable. But for most, life is also free and unstructured, away from the confines of home and school. The chronology of the university calendar is the structure by which the staff and students organise their lives. Facebook plays into this chronology and segmentation of life.

When students (typically) start university at eighteen, it is the last part of their temporal educational journey. Time, when university starts, is likely to be much more unstructured than students have previously experienced. This previously “learned” use of time from schooling is no longer necessary or even expected. Understanding how to use this newfound time could involve filling it with activities/societies and study or you could sleep 12 hours a day and play PlayStation in your dressing gown. Nobody can tell you otherwise! A student can choose whether to attend lectures (or not). Students can learn to use their (free) time differently, away from the structures of parents (caveat – only students living away from home). University is a different time compared to the rigid education system before (or work) and the new time to come after. I argue that each year a university has a different conceptual time. First year, settling in, becoming and belonging, you only have to achieve forty percent to pass the year; second year, study becomes more serious, your friendships are more settled. The final year is a mixture of serious study, job and course applications, while making the most of being a student.

The data discussed here repeat my FbF stories and are discussed with associated literature. Each of the preceding stories is attributed to one voice but is representative of all my Facebook friends’ experiences to a greater or lesser extent. Along with the FbF story data, some extra excerpts of interviews are used where appropriate to support a theme.

This section details some views of time on Facebook. Facebook allows users to connect with their past more easily. There is a “real-time narrative”, with which users create and interact. Time can be used as a lens to explore Facebook, both at a clock time level and

beyond. What are the implicit temporalities of Facebook? The “real time narrative” of Facebook at the same time makes Facebook present and yet makes the orientation to the present more difficult (Miller, 2011). My work considers how thoughts of the past, present and future influence Facebook use by students and whether Facebook takes us to real (imaginary) pasts and futures? And offer us the invincible and irresistible? (Carnes, 2004).

The next six sections draw upon these ideas in more detail and propose that there are many reasons why a student is not “wasting” their time on Facebook. I have structured the following sections under the meta-theme headings of Time and Social that I discussed in detail in the analysis section in Chapter 3 (see p.86). I review them here as a reminder:

Typology of Time

- Liminality (Academic & Social)
- Liminoid
- Space-time
- Timescales
- Clock time
- When time.

Typology of Social

- Being public
- Being social
- Being academic
- Liminal friendships.

The nature of the data means that some of these themes overlap but I present them under the theme, which I feel is more prominent within the data. Here follows the seven sections of discussion.

Making friends in the digital

Space-time // Being social // When time // Timescales

Here follows the discussion of the data presented in Ruth's story, "Making friends in the digital" in Chapter 4, under the themes of: "finding my place", "meeting Facebook-to-Facebook" and "meeting face-to-face".

The journey begins. This section explores this relationship between Facebook and the social interaction, which took place before the students had set foot inside the physical buildings of the campus environment of the university. It describes the importance of Facebook as the "social glue" (Madge et al., 2009, p.1) that holds it all together at this betwixt (Palmer et al., 2009) time. The students are about to embark on what they and the media assume to be the "time of their lives" (Cheeseman, 2010). It focuses on the student accommodation or student halls of residence and the flatmates who live there. It draws in the main upon data from my Facebook Friends (FbF) and follows their experiences of "adding" people that they had not met face-to-face to be their Friends on Facebook. It also describes the process they went through to find their new flatmates on Facebook, their experiences pre-registration and culminating in the first week of the new semester, "Fresher's week" when they met face-to-face for the first time. Here I draw predominantly on Ruth's story and use her experiences, but also draw upon some of the experiences of my other FbF to offer what seemed to represent a "typical" view.

When time / Being social - Finding my place

In the UK, A-level results are released on the third Thursday of August. In this study the date was 19th August 2010. This is a "when time", the time of exam results. It does have a calendar time association but more importantly, unrelated to the actual date, this moment signifies the start of the university experience. This is the beginning of the liminal time period of being and becoming a student.

When Ruth found out she had a place to study Chemistry, she was excited. She would be a fresher, a new starter at university. She would be moving away from home for the first time and her thoughts turned to finding out which halls of residence or private accommodation she would be placed in and whom her flatmates would be. Facebook was the first place to turn upon finding out her exam results. She described:

I've just added University of Northam to my Facebook Profile - eeeek! And managed to find a few people who are doing Chemistry at Northam via the university Fresher's Facebook Page...I've been searching all day on the university Fresher's Facebook Group and I've also found a group for Gonville. And there I've found one of my housemates! A girl called Laura! I've added her as a friend so we can chat on Facebook Chat.

The students quickly turn to Facebook and the official university websites to learn more about where they will be staying. The city has a large range of accommodation options open to students studying in Northam and the university runs two official Facebook Pages for their two accommodation “villages”. These are spaces where the students can contact each other before they start. As Ruth described, she searched the official Facebook Page to look for people in her accommodation village “Gonville”. As information seeking spaces, these official Facebook Pages were supplemented by unofficial Facebook Group spaces and these were set up autonomously by students interested in finding out whom they would be sharing the next year’s experiences with. Ruth found that finding flatmates via Facebook was simply organised. She described:

You post your flat building name and flat number, “Gonville A3”, for example, in the Wall feed of the public Page or Group and others who are in the same flat or one nearby will comment on your post to let you know where they are (Ruth interview Nov 2010).

This public use of Facebook allows the students to see each other’s name and by posting there this could be seen as an acceptance to be contacted by the other members of the Page or Group. As one student describes, “there’s no other mechanism in the place with the uni to know who you’re living with. And you can use Facebook as that mechanism” (Sally flat mate focus group May 2011). This way, Ruth was free to contact her new flat mate, Laura, through her own Facebook Profile so they could chat privately away from the public Group space.

The existence of Facebook means the students quickly assume that the default position is that you should know whom you are living with. Before Facebook this was neither possible

nor considered necessary. This is an example of how Facebook shapes expectations. It makes the uncertainty of the liminal time more bearable. Everything the students are doing is around trying to make what is uncertain, certain and to move out of the liminal phase.

Space-time - Meeting Facebook-to-Facebook

Ruth first met Laura Facebook-to-Facebook by adding her as a Friend. They then both had access to each other's Profiles and spent a significant amount of time on Facebook Chat, talking and getting to know each other. As well as making friends with Laura, Ruth also made Friends with fourteen others who would be living in her block "Gonville", in September. The act of adding a person to your contacts means the new Facebook Friend can see all the information on your Profile that you choose to show them. Getting to know people "Facebook-to-Facebook" might include writing on each other's Walls, or the conversation might take place in private through Messages or Chat (see Grammar section p.8 if you are unsure of this terminology). A popular "getting to know" practice is that of "Stalking" new Friends. Ruth described spending time stalking her new Friends' photos and Wall posts:

I've made friends with one of the boys who lives in flat B1, I guess near our flat? I've added loads of other people from Gonville and the uni generally, so I'll know loads of people when I start. I've been stalking them every evening after work, looking through all their Photos and Wall postings and chatting to some of them on Chat too. It's going to be ace when I get there. They all seem really normal and like I'll get on with them.

Through Facebook "Stalking", which is the act of looking and searching through another person's Profile at their Wall postings, Photos and Comments, a fair amount of information can be learned about that person, depending on how much they have chosen to make available to you, the stalker. For some students, this first phase of initial contact and recognition moved a step further beyond the identification of flatmates, saying hello and stalking, to more developed longer discussions and the development of "Friendships". These factors are important starting points for developing the social relations, which could help with settling at university. The amount of time given over to these activities was significant and Ruth told me she would spend every evening after work in the first few weeks after getting her exam results stalking and talking to new Northam people.

By using Facebook in this manner, Ruth and her flatmates were going beyond the recognition of knowing they were going to live together to discussing more details about their lives. One of the main types of discussion was what would be happening in their first week as undergraduate students. More commonly called “Fresher’s week”, at the University of Northam this involves a focused week-long set of activities to encourage the new students to get to know the university, the Student’s Union and each other. Much of the focus of these conversations was organisational in nature and focused on the details of various “Fresher’s” events and parties. Long threads left on each others’ Walls and late night Chat conversations were used to build friendships and this heralds, for some, the beginning of the social support which can be a key element of integrating into university (Wilcox et al., 2005). In this period of “meeting Facebook-to-Facebook” Ruth and her new Friends made plans for what they would do when they met face-to-face. The Students’ Union organises the Fresher’s activities, and these feature highly as ones to be seen to be taking part in. A Facebook Event is created by the Students’ Union and people who are going to that event can choose to click “attending”, this then means that this event shows up on their Facebook Profile. The use of Facebook Events enables Ruth to signal to her other Facebook friends what she will be doing.

Only a week to go! We’ve found another flat mate! Last night the 3 of us talked for about 4 or 5 hours and made loads of plans for being at uni. We’re all sorted for Fresher’s week, all the tickets are bought. We’re going to the Beach Party!!!

Event notification: Northam Students’ Union Marsh Village Beach Party. Attending.

By using Event notifications in this manner Ruth and her Friends tell each other through showing on their Profile page how they will be spending their time in Fresher’s week. This is a social practice of attending similar activities. In this manner, Facebook is the “social glue” (Madge et al., 2009), which bonds the students before they have even set foot on the campus. This time spent pre-university pays off as Ruth exclaimed “I know everyone!” and she said this made her feel more at ease when she arrived on her first day at the halls of residence.

Of my FbF, three of them found some or all of their flatmates on Facebook before they started university. Mike spent a great deal of time trying to locate his flatmates but to no

avail. Ying and Tomas, both international students, told me they had no desire to contact people before they arrived; “I don’t add people I’ve never seen before” (Ying excerpt from focus group Nov 2010). Thus, although a large majority of the students share this practice, it is by no means a homogeneous approach.

This practice of pre-arrival socialisation and organisation shifts the space-time spent at university (Massey, 2005). It makes the start date earlier and extends the university space-time and means that for some people they are already becoming a student in the comfort of their own homes by socialising in the digital space of Facebook.

My findings show that not being a Facebook member or making a choice not to track down your flat or course mates does not disadvantage the students. In the case of my FbF, I would argue they all (bar Tomas) ended up with a set of close friends in Northam so the meeting Facebook-to-Facebook made little impact long term. From Ruth’s experience I feel it made her more confident going into the first week and may have helped her to settle in more quickly.

When time / Being social - Meeting Face-to-Face

In meeting her flat-mates for the first time face-to-face, Ruth describes everything being “just as she expected”. She attained this understanding and knowledge from meeting Facebook-to-Facebook. This is because the timescale of the university had already begun (Lemke, 2000) and Ruth had been made aware of some of the things that could have been uncertain for her.

For another view of this practice we can look at the only one of Ruth’s flatmates who did not meet up Facebook-to-Facebook. Ruth’s flat mate did not know anyone on the day all the students moved into their new accommodation and she described feeling “out of it” in the first few hours. Ruth told me the non-Facebook girl spent all Fresher’s week “partying with them” and so by the end of the week they were “all on a level”. She compensated for her absence on Facebook through joining in with face-to-face activities.

Ruth explained in an interview two months after starting university:

luckily in Fresher's week there were 4 of us who went out the most and the girl we

hadn't met on Facebook was one of them, so now it's like Facebook doesn't make any difference but it did the first couple of days I think.

Ruth's flat mate is only represented through Ruth's commentary, however, I find Ruth's description of events convincing as the four girls continued to live together for the remainder of their time at university. I do not want to overprivilege the use of Facebook at this time as being the only way to make friends at the start of university, as in two cases of my FbF they did not all meet all their flatmates on Facebook.

Once Ruth and her flat-mates met face-to-face, certain Facebook activities and practices were undertaken which reinforced the friendships. Tagging flatmates in a photo album for example, is a public activity, which links people together, since tags alert the attention of all Friends associated with each other.

RECENT ACTIVITY Ruth Lawrence was tagged in Laura Jones's album. Freshers Shenanigans

Tagging a friend in a Status update is another public activity, which Ellison and boyd (2012) refer to as public displays of connection, where SNS are used not just to socialise but display relationships to others. This is an act of "being social":

We had a lovely late night bonding session with Rebecca Hendry, randomly interrupted by Paul Brown attempting to reach our first floor window while wearing a superhero outfit... Gotta love freshers!

Ruth made nine new friends on Facebook in the first week and was tagged in her Friend's album "Fresher's Shenanigans". She updated her location to Northam and this is an important "when time" behaviour. It is the beginning of the academic year and she is in a new location as she is now a student in Northam.

I see these face-to-face meetings of Ruth and her flat-mates as turning point experiences (Palmer et al., 2009). In this case they went well, but some of my FbF had less positive experiences of finding people on Facebook and of aligning the Facebook and face-to-face impressions. Mike describes his experience:

I didn't have that, nobody, I worked out the chances are if they're doing computer science they're probably slightly geeky and they've looked at the forums and gone, er no. And gone on Facebook and gone there's tonnes of privacy issues, "I'm not going to bother talking to anyone. That's why I didn't find anyone from my course (Mike excerpt from focus group Nov 2010).

Josie had a positive experience in the pre-university digital meet-up with some of her flatmates on Facebook and many of her course mates through a departmental Facebook Page, but she had a less positive experience in the physical world.

One particular girl had a lot of problems because she behaved one way on Facebook and then was completely the opposite when everyone met her in Fresher's Week, and a lot of people still haven't quite got over the difference in her (Josie describing a Facebook Friend, interview June 2011).

She went on:

I think you assume that you know someone a little bit more than you probably do because of Facebook, but I wouldn't say that you make an assessment of them forever after because of it, because a lot of the time you're taken aback and then re-judge, and so I suppose I would generally say your impression on Facebook is not an accurate one (Josie interview June 2011).

Josie's reflective comments, which she discussed with me at the end of the academic year, show that not all my FbF had similar experiences. They also show that some people see the importance of having a coherent performance across spaces (Davies, 2012). To be one way on Facebook and then a different way when meeting face-to-face can make a negative impression and this can have a lasting impact.

The time pre-university, before any student sets foot on the physical campus, is a short condensed time of the year where lifelong friendships can be made (Brooks, 2007). Facebook is a place to find people with similar interests, and it is a space-time whereby the social bonds, which could support you through the university experience, can be made.

What have we learnt from Ruth's story?

Space-time // Being social // When time // Timescales

Making Friends on Facebook is certainly not the be all and end all of making friends when starting university, but for some of my FbF it really helped them to feel settled, before they had even set foot within the physical campus of the university. Having the shared experience of chatting over the summer and finding out a little about the people, who they were sharing their living, eating and sleeping time with, meant that when the face-to-face meeting finally came they felt confident. These practices offer the “social support” which Wilcox et al. (2005, p.709) found to be so important to a successful integration into the world of the university. Wilcox et al. (2005), suggest that “difficulties in making compatible friends” can be a reason for students to withdraw early from a university course. In the cases of my FbF, their initial Facebook-to-Facebook meetings offered a starting point upon which friendships could be built and then this personal information could be discussed further. This replicates the findings of Yorke and Longden (2008) that “making friends is a crucial element of a positive higher education experience” (p.8). Facebook offers a liminal space for the new students to use to build confidence and start their university lives. The liminal time before the university term starts can be a key moment in a new student's life but this does not mean a student will be friendless if they do not take part in Facebook.

This is a liminal time before university begins and the use of Facebook extends the time relationship with the university experience. The practice of meeting Facebook-to-Facebook has extended the space-time (Massey, 2005) and timescale of the university and, for many students, the ecosocial system of the university starts on Facebook (Lemke, 2000).

Facebook organises my life at uni

Space-time // Being public // Being social

Here follows the discussion of the data presented in Josie's story, "Facebook organises my life at uni" in Chapter 4, under the themes of: "this uni is run on Facebook" and "societies and watching tv" and "I'm always on".

The first semester for a fresher student is full of new opportunities, new activities, new people and new places. Josie leads a busy life.

This section details how my Facebook friends use Facebook, and particularly Facebook Events as an organisational tool and the importance of it as the main form of communication between friends and to manage their clock time (Adam, 1995). All of my Facebook Friends have experienced the temporal connection between university activities, societies and Facebook. The "always on" nature of Facebook means that Facebook is their first port of call when trying to find out information and yet it offers a liminal space (Turner, 1967) to "be", in between the regulation of the organised structures of timetabled lectures and Facebook Events. Facebook offers a space where the smallest intricacies of student life can be planned and documented for all to join in. The "always on" nature of Facebook at this point of the year offers many opportunities for socialisation for the students. They can be in constant contact with their Friends while organising what to do.

Being social - This uni is run on Facebook

Josie uses Facebook as her go-to space to find out information about university. She observes that: "this uni is run on Facebook". Examples of this can be seen in, what could be termed as, more "official" or formal uses of Facebook. Josie likes the University of Northam Page. This means she receives any updates the Page makes straight to her News Feed.

RECENT ACTIVITY Josie likes Music (University of Northam).

The importance being a member of the Page is shown when she nearly missed out on a social event as she "didn't get the Event invite". She subsequently joins the Group. From now on she automatically gets updates to her News Feed and Notifications of any Events to which the members of the Group are invited.

In her role as the dual honours rep, Josie takes advantage of the affordances of the university being run on Facebook to ask her course mates what “gripes or happiness” they have to share through Facebook Messages. She received thirty Messages in reply. She finds she gets more responses this way rather than via university email, which, she says, people hardly check.

Facebook is used in place of more traditional methods of communication, such as a notice on the door of a lecture theatre, or an all-class email, to inform students of timetable changes. This is most likely to be a student-led practice. Josie finds this a useful but unsatisfactory method of communication. She said: “I wish the university was more organised and that lessons were not rearranged at all”.

Josie comments on how busy she was with lectures and activities from 9am - 10pm one day and 9am - 4pm another.

Josie uses Facebook to support the organisation of her workload. She finds out that an essay, which she thought was due the next Friday, is due in the following day. She describes that her other Friends had been discussing how they were getting on with it on a Status update. Josie then commented on the Status and found out the deadline was the next day. The immediacy that Facebook gave Josie in keeping up to date with course knowledge, also gave her an understanding of the wider News items and how these impact on the university.

The winter of 2010 brought particularly heavy snow to Northam. Josie’s first port of call in the morning, from her bed using her Blackberry mobile phone, was checking Facebook to gain information about whether the university was open for classes. Her friends asked each other through a Status update if university was open. No-one knew the answer. Josie switched to her university email, on her Blackberry. The official source of snow information came in the form of an email from the Facilities Department. The email said university was closed. Josie then relayed this information across to everyone on Facebook through a Status update:

All lectures cancelled and uni closed!

Josie is happy that she is FbF with one of her university lecturers. This means when the lecturer posts an interesting web link as her own Facebook Status, Josie can see the link. The lecturer shares information this way rather than via email, which Josie prefers. She explains the informal connection with the member of staff means she is more likely to engage with the information. Also, there is too much spam in the uni email and she does not like to use it.

Being public - Societies and watching TV

Josie uses the Facebook Events feature to keep up to date with what is happening in the many university societies she is a member of. These extra curricular groups are run for students by students and Josie is a member of a range of them, from the Film unit to Singsoc. It is perceived by students and promoted by university that being a member of a society, and particularly if you are a member of the organising committee, is an important and useful skill, which can be added to your CV and is something that employers are interested in (Bradley et al., 2013; Future Track, 2012).

Facebook affords many of the societies a means of communication and Josie told me that without it she would find it difficult to undertake her role as secretary on the Singsoc committee. She explained that changes often occur to meeting times or rooms and so having the ability to contact many people at once, quickly and for free, was important. The use of the Facebook Event function means that an event (a film screening, for example) can be publicised to many people and they can choose to attend or decline. This can offer a rough estimate of attendees. The society would set up a Group on Facebook. A function whereby members, who ask to join, get information from the Group in their News Feed and the administrator of the Group can invite all the members to Events. There are sections, such as Notes, where documents like meeting minutes can be shared.

Facebook Events are a key element to these Pages and Groups and to the organisation of my Facebook Friends' lives. Events offer a central place for all the information about a particular happening to be described and for Friends to be invited.

The ability to contact many people at once, with ease and with all the same information, is one of the reasons my Facebook Friends like using Events so much. They add structure to

their “hectic” university schedules, organising everything from committee meetings to watching television at a friend’s house. As Mike suggests:

Like most of the stuff that I do, be that bar crawls or going on random things like the murder walk that tends to be organised through Facebook as that’s easier for them to organise. They say here’s what it is, here’s the theme for the bar crawl and then people comment about costume ideas and it makes more sense than just being sent an email saying we’re going on a bar crawl on Friday. I think every stuff that hasn’t been societies like me going to someone’s house and watching the whole of Chuck in one go that’s organised through Facebook. It’s, here’s where I live, here’s what time we start, “oh no I can’t do that time” let’s change it and then everyone knows.

Space-time - I’m always on

In contrast to the time-regulated use of Events to run university life, Josie describes her more general use of the site, much more intensely, as “I’m always on it”. She automatically logs on to the site when she opens her laptop in the morning and she checks it on her phone on the way to university. Josie describes:

The beauty of Facebook is, it’s always there, but also, it’s always there

and she went on to say:

There is something about the rolling nature of Facebook that means it is never off. I can always be contacted and people think nothing of sending a Message or posting at 00.30, that didn’t happen before.

This “always on” nature of Facebook use is liminal in its very essence. Checking or looking at Facebook is what Josie and Sally do in between academic study, socialising and taking part in Events.

As Sally describes:

I check Facebook at least everyday, I mean, a lot everyday as well, I mean I’ve got it on my phone so I can check it. So if I’m in a lecture I’ll have a quick check. I don’t

even know what I really check for?....the notifications? I guess most of the time I just check; a quick scan of the News Feed, go off...come back in twenty minutes (laughing), check again. It's just so easy, I think that's the problem. If I'm doing work on the computer, it's just a little break.

I see that the practices described here as “just checking” or “doing nothing” are far more than that. Josie and Sally are making sense of the wider ecosocial system (Lemke, 2000) of their Friends old and new and the events and happenings of university life.

The persistent and pervasive nature of Facebook use by my FbF offers me a view of how students “do” university (Davies, 2013). The “always on” nature of Facebook means that Facebook is their first port of call when trying to find out information, be involved in any of the new activities university life has to offer, organise a night out or understand an assignment.

Sally describes:

It [Facebook] is really good, I'm glad its there, but I don't think I'm obsessed by it, there are some people who are giving up for Lent. I couldn't do that as it's there and I wouldn't want to miss out on Events, or terrible pictures tagged without me realising.

Here, Sally's comment shows that the constant presence of Facebook within the university space-time dominates some students' lives. Facebook structures how students' use their time within their wider ecosocial lives, with each Update, Event or Tag adding together to make up the first-year experience.

What have we learnt from Josie's story?

Space-time // Being public // Being social

My Facebook Friends use Events to structure their time and this is very much situated within the temporalities of university life (Adam, 1995). The perception Josie has that, "this uni is run on Facebook", it could be said, stems from her regulated and repetitive nature of Event usage for everything. The real-time narrative (Miller, 2011) of the Facebook clock is punctuated by Josie's Events and the Events of her Friends that she can see in her News Feed. These tell Josie what she should be doing and when. It is similar to the structure of the academic timetable and yet for her social and extra curricular life.

Josie leads a busy life, academically, socially and through a fast array of extra-curricular activities. Facebook accentuates this in her mind as it acts as a diary, keeping her entire social, academic and extra-curricular activities in one place. The always-on nature of Facebook means that Facebook is viewed as a necessity as well as a hassle. It is the go-to space-time for Josie to organise and manage her interconnected life worlds of the social and the academic (Wilcox et al., 2005). Part of settling into university is being able to manage all these commitments (Kidwell, 2005) and Facebook offers a useful, proactive and helpful way of doing this.

What is seen as a highly organised and timely way to communicate is often viewed in sharp contrast with the organisational communication offered by the institution. Josie and her Friends use Facebook as a support and feedback mechanism to air grievances and give each other very timely feedback, which they feel they do not get from the formal structures of the institution. Similarly, Bradley et al. (2013) found that their participants "calculated the cost of each lecture and seminar, and were none too pleased if one was cancelled" (p.10). The implications of this for the institution are that within the networked public (boyd, 2008) of Facebook, students organise and self-manage and are quick to communicate grievances.

Disconnection: I don't want to be "here" anymore
When time // // Space-time // Being academic

Here follows the discussion of the data presented in Tomas' story, "Disconnection - I don't want to be "here" anymore" in Chapter 4, under the headings: "Disengagement", "I don't want to chat now" and "I'm so bored".

I use the end of semester one to highlight different dominant temporal practices and their relationship to the first year at university. There are new disconnecting experiences that break the everyday patterns, which the students are settling into. Participation or non-participation within both university life and the use of Facebook at this time of year was varied across my FbF.

The end of semester one is a mix of calendar and when times (Adam, 1995). The end of the calendar year heralds the Christmas break and this also is the end of the taught sessions of semester one. There is much excitement within the student body about the coming holidays; a chance to go back to their families, see their home friends and tell tales of their first semester at university. Five of my FbF Profiles were full of photos of celebration dinners cooked together with friends and flatmates, Messages from university friends urging that they not be forgotten over the break and Photos of farewell drinks. There exists a tension between the previous life, and the new life. Newly-made university friends, who have shared experiences intensely over the last twelve weeks, will not be seeing each other for the next four or five weeks. End of term parties are held and goodbyes are said. It is a hectic time of year since, concurrent to preparing to go home, students may have assignments due and exams to revise for. The structure of the semester is that the vacation period separates the activities of teaching and assessment.

For international students, this time of year can be particularly difficult as they may not be able to go home to visit their families, like Ying. She spent the Christmas vacation in Northam with a small handful of other international students. This disconnection can be particularly difficult and feelings of loneliness and isolation can occur (Bradley, 2000). The use of Facebook and Skype keeps the students who stay in Northam connected with their families and friends.

This section uses the story of Tomas to explore some of the experiences of disconnection my FbF had. These lack of connections are found both within the everyday experiences of the university and practices on Facebook. They range from being disconnected from the people my FbF found themselves interacting with and finding the academic work disengaging, to a conscious decision not to use certain parts of their Facebook account or to deactivate it all together so they could concentrate on studying.

Tomas did not have a positive experience at the University of Northam. He felt on many levels that he did not fit in. Tomas' experience of the first year at university could be described as somewhat different to my other FbF. Tomas decided to leave the university in January 2011 at the end of the first semester. The reason for this, he told me, was that this university had been his second choice and that he really wanted to go to an elite University. He found the workload at Northam "too light and it's not meaningful or productive". Tomas felt this about the course he had chosen, the students on the course, the way other students used Facebook and the general student experience at Northam University.

Disconnection at university falls under the body of work on retention (Box et al., 2012; Tinto, 2007). In the case of Tomas, who chose to leave the university, he is one of those "lost" numbers that make up the non-retention figures.

In choosing to leave the university at the end of the first semester, Tomas was also disconnected with this key "when time" of year (Adam, 1995). At the time of end of semester exams, when the rest of the student body was revising, preparing for exams and writing papers for assessment, Tomas was packing up his belongings to move back to his home country. This disconnect, at a time of year when everyone else was coming together and bonding over the shared difficulties of re-learning a semester's worth of work, meant that Tomas felt an extra element of not belonging.

His experiences illustrate the themes of this section; the feelings of not belonging, not fitting in or not sharing the same practices as other students, not understanding or wanting to understand how to fit into the dominant structures and practices of this university or the social network. I discuss these in the three following sections "Disengagement", "I don't want to chat now" and "I'm so bored".

When time - Disengagement

The disengagement Tomas experienced was with both the university and with Facebook. He described communication on Facebook as very superficial. Unlike the majority of my FbF, Tomas did not make Friends with anyone on Facebook before starting university and he only made Friends with one person, a flat mate, on Facebook during his time in Northam. For him, being at university was not intrinsically linked to being on Facebook. He said that the two could operate independently; this is a different view from my other five FbF, who all described the interdependent link between university and Facebook.

Tomas described using his Facebook to “share other information that they (his Friends) might find interesting, like political things” and that the way he saw other students using it was “superficial”. Tomas, in this way, is disengaged with the dominant Facebook (and more general) student practices. He did not upload lots of Photos of himself out partying in Fresher’s week or make Friends with his flatmates on Facebook before meeting them in person. Tomas described the other students he knew as being “all play and no work”.

Hardey (2014) explores the possible social benefits of disconnection and suggests that in a world where we have unlimited connections, those people who choose to disconnect “help us identify points of modulating resistance to forms of always-on connectivity” (p.8). For the people in her study, the act of disconnection was a positive choice. To disconnect involves continuing self-management by the individual (Hardey, 2014). I believe Tomas was very aware of his choices not to engage with Facebook and the university in a similar manner to the other students and did self-manage his Profile in this way. This is in contrast to my other five FbF, who use Facebook as they would interact with their Friends on a daily basis, and Tomas’ practices could be seen as disengagement with the site.

Josie had similar feelings to Tomas about other students’ lack of “serious” engagement with the subject they were studying.

She describes her concerns about the other students on her Music degree:

I can’t have a conversation about politics or literature really in the Music department at all. It sounds really snobby to put it like that, but I mean if we’re talking about, say, an opera, I can’t bring up the play that the opera was based on because people shut down. And I sort of hoped that it would be a much more sort of open environment.

In this way the social bond in “being academic” was not reciprocated and Josie felt a lack of social connection. This notion of not being academic enough is also picked up later in this section under the theme of “I’m so bored”. Student engagement at university is a key research topic of the moment and linked to transitions (as discussed in the literature review, see p.27) with focus on engagement both academically and socially. The lack of academic engagement felt by Tomas was detrimental to him continuing at the university. It is causal to make a link between his dislike of Facebook and him not staying at this university but, with other studies showing the importance of social support at university leading to retained students (Wilcox et al., 2005), his lack of having shared experiences through Facebook may have been a contributing factor.

Space-time - I don’t want to chat now

Tomas did not use Facebook in the instant manner that my other five FbF did. He did not use the Chat function and he told me he preferred to email people. He would appear “off” if his friends were to look for him on Chat. Tomas did not see Facebook as a place to chat. This is similar to the responses of the questionnaire participants where this instant messaging form of communication was used by 10% of the questionnaire respondents by the end of their first year. This is surprising to note, as other studies have reported students having a high usage of Facebook Chat (compared to other Facebook activities), (Smock et al., 2011). The rest of my FbF told me they used the Chat function to talk to their Friends on Facebook with varying regularity. Josie, Sally, Mike and Ying did so on a daily basis.

A practice which I did not see in Tomas’ Facebook use, but that I did in what Ruth, Sally and Josie told me about their Friends’ Facebook habits, was that some students choose to deactivate their Facebook account during the exam period. Josie described a Friend’s behaviour: “she deleted her Facebook account for the whole of the exam period, and re-instated it afterwards”. This practice ranges from a full deactivation of an account so no Profile exists to just turning off the Chat function, a practice which Ruth, Sally and Mike used. In this way, the students are managing their social accessibility (Quan-Hasse & Collins, 2008) by choosing how they could be contacted and the level of their presence on the site. Sometimes being present but unavailable (by turning of the Chat function for example) is not sufficient and therefore removing oneself from the network is needed. This “de-presencing” (Quan-Haase & Collins, 2008) from the site at this key point in the year

could be seen as a form of time management, a decision not to be involved. I see this as showing that students are making a decision about where to focus their time. They are choosing to disconnect to concentrate on something more important, whether that be an assignment deadline or preparing for upcoming exams. Junco (2012) found that chatting on Facebook meant less time was spent preparing for class and also that it was a negative predictor of GPA. So in this case, it could be said that Ruth, Sally and Mike had an understanding of how much time the use of Facebook Chat could take away from their study time.

Josie has mixed feelings about the way Facebook intersects with university life. She suggests “if it wasn’t integral to university I’d probably take myself off it to be honest, but I need it” she went on to say “my flat mate leaves her laptop in her room and comes to the library so she doesn’t have internet connection because of that invasion”. Another way of seeing this de-presencing at this time of year is that the exam period was seen as an acceptable time to be “off” Facebook. This could be seen as a response to the “always on” nature of Facebook, which I discussed in the previous section. It could be said that the end of semester one exam period is a key time for students to disengage with Facebook.

Being academic - I’m so bored

The final theme in this section is that of boredom. In discussing their use of Facebook with me, Ruth, Josie, Sally, Mike and Ying described that they used Facebook because they were bored. Sally said “Yeah. Every time I’m bored I’m like “oh I’ll go on Facebook””. This was an ongoing theme throughout the year and the data but I choose to write about it in this mid-section as I see the notion of boredom being linked to disconnection and this association was prevalent in the lives of my FbF.

Throughout the time I spent with Tomas, he never used the word ‘bored’ to describe how he felt of his time at university, instead he said:

the university wasn’t what I expected it to be, it wasn’t challenging enough.

Some of Sally’s flatmates felt similarly. It seemed that many of the feelings of boredom stemmed from the experience that university was not as they expected and that the academic work was easy. The first year was too easy and my FbF also described their

boredom stemming from spending too little time in a taught class. One of Sally's flatmates described how he spent his time at university:

Yeah I'm a little bit bored with my course, just....the workload is not what I thought it was going to be, and yeah they're really bad at scheduling lectures. The first lecture I have at 9 o'clock and then at 6 o'clock on a Tuesday, with nothing in between. I didn't want to go to both of them, apart from maybe the first one. From then on....yeah, it was just like one or the other but never both. I mean I'm only in for 8 hours a week most of the time, and that's not even a full working day in some people's lives is it?

I see these feelings of boredom, which are expressed, as students coming to terms with how to deal with what suddenly seems to be so much free and unstructured time. The previous rigid school timetable has ordered their lives for a significant amount of time before they came to university but now they might have a class first thing in the morning and then one in the evening and they find this challenging. The free time in between makes life seem boring; they go on Facebook to fill up the time, but they are still bored.

Another reason for the boredom is that the university courses are not challenging enough, as Tomas felt. Haggis (2006) discusses one of the current problems in HE in the UK that "meeting learner needs should be a key focus for institutional attention" (p.1) but he argues that this is unrealistic, based on the diverse nature of the student body. In teaching to ensure the weaker students are up to the required level, the more able students are finding that they have already studied a subject or they are not learning anything new.

What have we learnt from Tomas' story?

When time // space-time // being academic

The end of the first semester is the time for preparation for exams, it is a time to disengage from Facebook and it can be a time to disengage from usual student practices of socialising to concentrate on studying. For Tomas, it was the time to disengage from the university all together.

The end of semester one is a “when time” within the academic year. There is a shift change in my FbF temporal landscape. There is no longer a university-imposed timetable to follow and yet the looming exam timetable can be cause for a flurry of activity or nervousness. It is a time for reflection on both the social and on the academic lifeworlds. Leaving new friends from university and returning to the old, at the same time as reviewing the learning for semester one.

It is a time for “being academic” in preparation for the end of semester one and with this there can come tensions with the dominant practices and structures of Facebook use. Some students see that there are benefits of disconnection (Hardey, 2014) and choose to remove themselves from the site altogether.

Another theme running concurrent to this is that some students realise they do not fit within the dominant practices of university life and they chose to disconnect with the university for good. Notions of “boredom” or unrealistic expectations of what university life will be like can be seen as some of the reasons for this disconnection. There are two kinds of unrealistic expectation of the student experience. Firstly, not having an understanding of what to do with new-found “free time”. In this way, the space-time of the students shifts from controlled to open-ended and Facebook is the go-to space-time when students are bored. This, in turn, exacerbates the feelings of boredom due to the continued checking and re-checking of the site. Secondly, the amount of free “space-time” is in tension with the feelings of wanting to “be academic”.

These findings make me question whether students’ expectations of university are unrealistic. Pancer et al. (2000) found that if a student had a complex expectation of what

university would be like before they started, they were more likely to cope with stressful situations when there. If a student had a complex expectation of university but in reality they found university life unchallenging and boring, would that make it difficult or them to cope with the lack of stress and challenge? In the US, the National Survey of Student Engagement found that academic challenge is central to the student engagement construct (NSSE, 2002, p.10). Trowler & Trowler (2010) discussed the importance of engagement with students on many levels as it leads to improved learning and teaching outcomes. I see student expectations of university and student engagement once at university as interesting future research areas.

Facebook connects me to all my friends

Being social // Being public // Liminal friends // Space-time

The discussion that follows is based on the data presented in Sally's story "I wouldn't go, "oh, I'm friends with them because I've got them on Facebook"" in Chapter 4, under these three headings: "what's a Facebook friend?", "managing friends and access" and "scales of friends (near and far)".

The second semester is "business as usual" (Selwyn, 2009, p.173) for my FbF. Back to the old routines of study and socialising. While the first semester was focused on getting to know the university, in contrast, the second semester is one of consolidation and knowing it all. A visit home for Christmas has solidified friendships there and plans are being made for which university friends will live together in the second year of study.

Friendship matters at university.

Facebook is a place where there is the opportunity for sets of different friends to collide together; a "friend collapse", so to speak, drawing on the work of (Marwick & boyd, 2011). One of the key notions of boyd's (2010) networked public is that contexts are collapsed, that is, "spatial, social and temporal boundaries" (p.49) are lacking and this makes it difficult to manage and maintain the context. The new university friends and the old home friends come together in the digital but, by this point in the academic year, it is highly likely that these sets of friends have met each other face-to-face through home friends visiting the university halls of residence.

In coming to understand the lives of my FbF, I have viewed two separate and yet intertwined areas of student life and Facebook use. These are "uni life" and "academic life". Academic life relates to your subject of study at the university; the lectures attended, assignments and studying. "Uni life" relates to everything else; the part of learning that is about "life" and life skills, such as, understanding about shopping and cooking for yourself. These form an important part of the student experience. These two lifeworlds, the social and the academic (Wilcox et al., 2005) form the backcloth of my analysis for the next two sections. Uni life is discussed in this section, Sally's story, and academic life in the following, Mike's story, although there is overlap as that is the nature of being a university student.

Being social / Liminal friends - What is a Facebook Friend?

Donath and boyd (2004) were among the first to write about public displays of connection and this notion of how friends connect and communicate with each other on SNS. The SNS brings connections or friends together in a common list. Facebook is a place for public displays of connection and Friendship, as it encourages members to “publicly articulate and display their social connections” (boyd, 2008, p.212). These may be friends or acquaintances. Sometimes, friends are described as “real friends” by my FbF and acquaintances are Friends. Friend and Friendship with a capital “F” are used by Rayners-Goldie (2012) to signify the different relationships between Friends on Facebook and friends. This is an important difference to note and I, too, use this to differentiate between them. The connections, which are articulated on Facebook, are people; friends of my FbF. For the most part, they are friendships moving from the face-to-face to the digital.

Friends are important to Sally. By this point in the academic year, she has 477 Friends. This is 101 more than when she started university. Her friends are the people she spends time with at university; her flatmates, the people who live in her halls block and a few people from her course. These are her “uni friends”. Her best friends are people she went to school with, who she grew up with. These are her “home friends”. Both of these sets of friends co-exist on Facebook. To Sally, both of these are her real friends and she describes them as “people she actually cares about”. They are “a select few” of “really, really close friends” and are generally the ones who show up in her News Feed. In contrast to her real friends, she says:

I mean I'm sure most of the people that pop up on my Facebook wall are probably my friends.

Sally acknowledges that they are “probably” her friends. This shows that not all Friends are in fact friends and this is acceptable. Sally describes some of the tensions surrounding her different Friends:

I really love my flatmates, and when everyone is there, you don't want to be like, ok I'll just go off now and phone my mates.

Facebook enables a space where a wide range of friends can co-exist and this is discussed later in this section under the heading “scales of friendship”. Within the university setting these Friends are important, offering support for a young student living away from home.

Josie, on the other hand, sees her Facebook Friend list as a phone book to keep all her contacts in one place and for future networking beyond university. Mayer & Puller (2008) note that university is an important place for social network formation and that these networks can influence future employment. The learning and development of networking and social skills were seen by Bradley et al. (2013) as valuable skills gained at university and their findings showed that the “mobilisation of cultural and social capitals...is a crucial part of what university life can offer” (p.6). In the case of my FbF, Facebook supports this skill development.

Sally did not have any friends who were not on Facebook. This was not the case for all my FbF but it was the norm in the group. Ying and Tomas had friends who were not on Facebook. It is worth acknowledging that there are many different understandings of the term “Friend” when used to describe the connection Facebook offers. Ellison et al. (2011) found that, in their sample, Facebook users understood the differences between friends and Friends. Five of my FbF described their “Friendships” as important to their experience at university. Tomas did not.

Space-time - Managing friends and access

Facebook is the place my FbF keep in contact with their variety of Friends. There is a range of different practices, which Sally uses to keep in touch with her Friends. Sally describes the management of interacting with these friends as an important activity on Facebook. Decisions surrounding the management of friends begin when thinking about which people to add as Friends. Sally is conscious of when she adds new Friends:

I’m not friends with someone until someone adds me. I do get snobby about adding people sometimes. I’m quite interested to see how I meet people over the next few years, I’m like “well surely this is the main time of meeting people is my university course”?

Sally feels that she should be meeting new people at university but she does not actively seek and add people to her Facebook. The practice of “adding” people is the method by which people you know (for the most part) ask to “be your Friend”. These show up on your account as a “Friend request”. Alternatively, you decide to add someone. The connection that Facebook affords through being someone’s Friend means that you can view their Profile and their list of Friends. You can also see which people you and your Friends have in common when someone asks to be your friend or interacts with you. “8 mutual Friends” would mean you have eight friends in common and you could then check how you know the person, from which social circle you share.

There are many decisions to make around Friending (the act of adding Friends) on Facebook. Sally describes the different approaches taken by people she knows:

some people are like “oh yeah I like them, whatever” and some people are like “I don’t really know you so I’ll ignore”

The decision to accept all Friend requests you receive, regardless of whether you know the person, is a practice that was more popular in the first semester and pre-starting university. It is something that is less likely to happen in the second semester. The more Friends you have increases the network of people you “know” at university and, as mentioned earlier, this can have far reaching implications for future employment (Mayer & Puller, 2008).

The number of Friends a person has is seen by some as a way to measure popularity (Wang, 2012), but for Sally this number was not important. She described:

I think I’m in the four hundreds, but I’m not sure. I’m sure that’s too many for who I actually care about

Sally sees Facebook as primarily for keeping in contact with the friends she already has. She calls these her “home friends” and she does this by writing a quick post on her friend’s Wall to let her know she is thinking of her.

I'm in a lecture and I check Facebook on my phone before the lecture starts. No notifications. My friends from home are usually quite good at sending me the odd message, I got one yesterday and it was nice, just like a little, hello.

A Notification is a signal that a Friend has interacted with you. On Facebook there are many cues to a Friend linking their Profile with yours. On Facebook you allow people access to your Profile and information through settings, and these are linked to your Friends' settings. For example, you can allow only your Friends to view photographs which you upload to your Profile, or you can allow "Friends of Friends" to view your Photos. This distinction has an influence over the reach of your Photos and Profile. Sally is conscious of how she manages her Profile. She explains:

I try to make it that people can't see anything on mine if they're not my friend.

The practice of "Tagging" Friends in Photos, which have been taken and uploaded to her Profile is a way Sally manages her Friends. The act of "Tagging" links two Profiles together through a named hyperlink of that person, usually linked over their face. Sally's album "North to the ham" is a visual documentation of her first year at university and she describes how she manages the photo album:

A lot of my uni friends have it set up so my friends from home can't see the photos I've been tagged in as the don't have "friends of friends" setting. So I have the "North to the ham album" to re-upload the photos, I think my friends in Northam must think I'm a bit weird?

Sally Gordon was tagged in Jane Green's album.

Sally was describing the nuanced way in which she uses Facebook. She made decisions based on what she wants her Friends and others to see of her Facebook content. Her "uni friends" choose to keep their Photos private from people they are not Friends with and so Sally gets around this by re-uploading the same photos to her own photo album. This means that she has to go out of her way to then re-upload photos which are already on her Profile so that her Friends from home can see them. This is deliberate Profile management and goes against the default setting of Facebook. Sally has management over her space-

time in this way (Massey, 2005). Access and privacy practices and decisions are key for Sally when she thinks about who can have access to her Facebook. Privacy concerns are linked to managing Friends at this time of year and this is in direct contrast to the pre-university activity whereby openness and a desire to meet new people was in the forefront of Ruth's mind.

There are different settings available to group and organise Friends on Facebook. These can mean that you limit the access to various parts of your Facebook but Sally does not use these.

I don't have different settings for different friends apart from I have a group on Chat for people that I talk to, otherwise there's this massive list and I can't see everyone. Otherwise there are at peak time, probably 50 max, some people in my flat will have about one hundred people – I don't understand that! Yeah maybe up to 60/70 occasionally. On an average day twenty/thirty? At a normal time, not seven thirty or anything. Probably a maximum of three? Most of the time even less, one or two. I guess it makes you look a bit popular if you've got all these going on? I don't really get it?

The majority of Sally's new Friends were added in the first semester, the time for making new friends and Friends, whereas the second semester is a time for consolidation and decisions are made as to whether a person stays a Friend. Second semester is a "when time" to cull a Friend. The practice of culling or deleting someone from your Friend list would mean that a person is no longer connected and therefore Friends with you on Facebook. This action usually takes place without the other person realising straight away. As Sally described:

there's a girl on my block that does Psychology, she deleted me the other day. I was like "whoa"

She was shocked by the deletion but then equally Sally also wanted to delete some of her Friends she describes:

I could happily delete quite a few people from home I reckon. A person I don't like came up in my News Feed the other day and I thought, "why don't you just delete her?" but I can't just delete her. I don't really like her but I want to know what she's up to. I'm just not that close to her.

The feeling that Sally would miss out on some detail of her Friend's life by not being Friends with her, I believe, is an example of the draw of Facebook. The access the site affords the users of each other's lives means that Friends do not get culled, just in case they do something interesting.

These practices of Friend accepting and culling are part of the Facebook etiquette (Hardey, 2008), which I observed in my FbF. I believe they are social norms still developing on Facebook.

Networked publics - Scales of friends (near and far)

Sally differentiates her groups of Facebook Friends as "home friends" and "uni friends". Others of my FbF, notably Mike, Ruth and Ying, take this differentiation a step further to include course mates and flatmates within their descriptions of the university friends.

I draw on the work of Lemke (2000) to explore these groups of Friends that Sally describes. Lemke questions how social moments add up to social life and that differing scales or units of time take place concurrently and that we should view these relationally to understand social life. By taking this notion of scales but applying it to the scales of Friendships, I found that Sally had many interactions with her different sets of Friends throughout the day and that these made up her social life. Sally's immediate near friends were her flatmates, her uni friends. She described that they called themselves "the E4 Wolfpack". Sally was happy she got on with them and told me they were "like a little family", describing that they took turns to cook for each other. They communicated on Facebook on a daily basis and had a separate Friend filter group for them to share information only between themselves (Facebook offers this function so that a person can limit who sees a Status posting).

Pancake day!

Enough pancake mix E4?! :)

Sally made many references through Status updates and Tagging in photos to her E4 flatmates. By doing this, I saw her signifying to others the connection to the people she lives with. This is an example of a timescale (Lemke, 2000) within the Facebook ecosocial system. This moment with her “uni friends” was one of the small actions which, when added together, made up the history of the Friendship. By referencing the E4 flat, through her Tags, Sally was connecting aspects of her physical world within the digital sphere.

Facebook can both help and hinder a student’s integration into “university life” through Facebook offering social support. A tension can exist between the “old” and “new” friends and the “pre” and “post” university identities of the student. Joanne, a flat mate of Sally, was an example of this. Sally said her “old” friends were shocked by her behaviour and drinking at university with her “new” friends. This finding is similar to that of Finn (2013), who found that relationships with family and friends are significant in settling in successfully at university, although the desire to be an “authentic student” (Finn, 2013, p.94) was often at odds with this expected behaviour. Davies (2013) in her study of young women on Facebook found similarly, that friends use Facebook to keep a surveillance of the lives of their Friends and may Comment on and discuss their behaviours if they do not meet expectations. Towards the end of the academic year (May 2011) Sally reflected:

I was thinking how much my friends changed and so much of my News Feed is people from Northam now, rather than that much of a mixture

Sally’s reflection highlights how place-specific Sally’s Friends are. The localised nature of much of her Facebook interaction shows the importance of the digital and physical connections.

What have we learnt from Sally's story?

Being social // Publicly social // Liminal friends // Space-time

Facebook is key to managing different types of friends whilst at university. At this point in a young person's life, it is probable that they have met a range of new people. The second semester is about engaging with these new people and broadening horizons (Future track, 2012). Friends offer a support network at this time of gaining independence and confidence in being away from home. For Sally there are "uni Friends" and "home friends". These are the people seen everyday at university and the friends from home. Facebook affords them coming together in one space-time in a friendship collapse. This friendship collapse was managed by Sally on Facebook in a range of ways: Functionally she used the Group Status update to only communicate with her flatmates and she used a personal photo album to show her home Friends what she was up to.

Facebook bridged the geographical space between Friends and offered a constant connection to them, but Sally was conscious not to spend all her time talking to her home friends. She used Facebook to keep in touch through a quick hello message, here and there. Keeping in touch with friends from home is important but they can also be a stifling influence to the way students present themselves on Facebook.

Facebook is an ecosocial system (Lemke, 2000) and the interactions between Friends make up the social. These networked public connections (boyd, 2007b) range from Tagging a photo or a Status update or Commenting on a Status update.

Friendships matter at university. The existing network of home friends is just as important as the new uni friends. Facebook, along with other digital spaces such as Skype and MSN are used to continue and develop both these sets of relationships. The existing social network of home friends is supplemented by new uni friends. Some of these Facebook Friends could be seen as liminal friends (Turner, 1967). They are in between friends, important for now, but not your real friends.

Facebook gave the students a feeling of *communitas* (Turner, 1983), a sense of bonding through what can be a confusing transitional time. This was the important social support, which Wilcox et al.'s (2009) findings support.

Using Facebook for academic study

Space-time // Being academic // Liminal space-time // Being public

The discussion that follows is based on the data presented in Mike's story in Chapter 4, "Using Facebook for academic study", under these two headings: "Help I've only written 700/1500!" and "We use Facebook in lectures, of course!"

The second semester is concurrently about friends and the social but also about cementing academic progress. A time to understand your subject in more detail and choose options for the next academic year.

In this section, I draw upon data from Mike's story to discuss examples of when Facebook is used in relation to academic study. The data is from Mike's Facebook and also from a student-run Facebook Group of which Mike is a member and through him I also became a member. The two sections explore the use of Facebook as peer support and present data, which shows how students manage the intersection of Facebook and study.

Ruth, Josie, Sally and Mike all told me that they worried about the "proper" use of their time while being at university. They found there was a tension between their social and academic lives and that Facebook, although offering a space for support, was also a distraction. In talking about their academic work and deadlines on Facebook, they found there was another context collapse whereby study and social spaces were blurred (Marwick & boyd, 2011).

Being academic. Liminal space-time – "Help I've only written 1186/1500!"

The Facebook Group that Mike is a member of was used for academic support. Mike updated his status with

I just discovered why people struggled with COM1001. I understood this in MA105 and I'm confused.

This suggests that he too finds a topic in a recent lecture difficult and offers an opening dialogue for his fellow classmates to discuss the topic. Much of the literature on peer support in HE positions this notion as a formal support mechanism (De Smet et al., 2008). Work by Timmis (2012, p.4) suggests that peer support is often better placed when it crosses the "formal-informal learning divide", and can be defined as "offering mutual help

and assistance at a social, cultural and affective level, involving both communication and collaboration amongst peers, working together” (ibid). I believe the Group offered this informal, social nature of peer support and that the members use Facebook to support academic activity through “being academic”. This is a form of social support.

Another practice was that of my FbF signaling to others that they were working on an assignment but not doing particularly well on it. This was done by Posting your word count versus word count needed to suggest that you have not finished the assignment. This practice was seen across all my FbF. Mike’s Friend posted:

1186/1500 words done and I have nothing more to say on implementing emotions or consciousness in machines...

In this case, this Status caused Mike to “Like” it. This could have signaled that he was in a similar situation. In other examples, Friends may post their word count in what could be seen as an action of solidarity or competition. It could be viewed as a cry for help, a request for support from other FbF. “I should be writing my assignment, it is not finished and I’m on Facebook. I need help and support”. It also signals a countdown to the approaching deadline, words, days, hours left.

A frequent practice on the Group Wall was that the current assignment was discussed in detail and those more knowledgeable would either offer or ask the others if they needed help? Members of the group used the Group Wall to post questions and the group members would try to help out. At 23.07 someone asked:

i have a problem with my java

Peer support, getting help and feedback from your classmates on assignments is a significant activity, which takes place within the Group and is a practice which many undergraduates take part in. Facebook affords any-time, real-time connection and feedback, which is unrivaled anywhere in the university campus. A face-to-face tutorial with a member of academic staff to go through a difficult element of the module teaching or assignment is invaluable, but unfortunately faculty members are unavailable late at

night. This is an example of time becoming destabilised at university and Facebook accentuates this through offering access to support that is not time-bounded.

The nature of this Group start-up was to have a shared space, as one member described “where we rant about terrible lectures, make bad course related jokes or talk about the assignments”. The instant and always on nature of the Group encourages its use as a peer support mechanism, as one user describes, “Facebook is left on constantly even if I am not checking it as it is sometimes used as a method of communication for group work in my modules”. The uses of instant messaging communications (such as those afforded by instant messaging in the Group Chat) are seen as well placed to offer peer support (Timmis, 2012).

Other peer support activities taking place in the Group include, using the Wall to ask the group course-related administration questions. These range from what are the deadlines for assignments to which readings are required for an upcoming seminar. A main focus of much of the Group Wall activity is discussing teaching topics that the students are struggling with, either asynchronously over time, or synchronously within a lecture or late at night before a deadline. The consistency of this Group as a space to return to anchors the class, it binds the group members together through their interrelations (Massey, 2005). These ongoing conversations are important for the students in making sense of and understanding what is expected of them in the institutional settings. Timmis (2012) suggests that students do not often realise the value of these everyday practices and that they are currently invisible to a large sector of academic and support staff in HE. The Group is a consistent liminal space to return to.

Being public. Being academic. Space-time – “We use Facebook in lectures, of course!”

Mike uses Facebook on his phone and laptop when he is in lectures. In this way, Facebook is used as a backchannel to lectures. The term “backchannel” has been associated with the use of social media and particularly in academic and commercial conferences where Twitter is used for delegates to converse on the topic being presented by the speaker. This is seen as the backchannel to the main presentation. The digital backchannel is described in relation to learning and teaching in the work of Baumgart et al. (2012) and Pohl et al. (2011) as a discussion channel of ideas, which takes place without

disturbing the lecturer. In their work, they describe a facilitated formal method of the lecturer supporting what they describe as the “incoherent backchannel discourse” (Baumgart et al., 2012, p.364). In this section, I discuss these perceived incoherent discourses, which take place in the digital backchannel of Group Chat. In this example, the lecturer is unaware of the digital chatter taking place alongside his lecture. The Group has a synchronous chat facility and the students use this to type messages to communicate with each other throughout the lecture. Mike described the reason for this activity, “the problem with most of his lectures is, if you asked a question, if he deemed it simple he didn’t answer it. But the problem was he never went through....never gave proper working and it ended that you don’t understand. So we went through it on the (Facebook) Group”.

This practice shows the interrelations between the digital space and the physical lecture theatre (Massey, 2005). The digital backchannel is layered upon the physical space. It is also layered upon other digital spaces in which the students may be visiting: a quick ‘trip’ to Google for the clarification of a term used, or to the university Learning Management System (LMS) to see how this topic fits with the module assignment. The main foci of the students are on the two spaces of the Group and the lecture theatre and these supplement one another. This digital backchannel is an informal, real-time method to get feedback when something is not clear. This use of peer support in the lecture theatre to help explain what the other students do not understand could be rooted in the power dynamics of a large lecture theatre and the histories of the delivery method. The students worry about asking a question in front of a large group and often their question is left unasked and unanswered as it was deemed too simple.

We all learn at different paces but currently we cannot stop or pause the lecturer mid-point as we can a YouTube video or on demand TV. The use of the Group as a backchannel may be seen as incoherent discourse as there is no lecturer involvement, but in this case it is a useful support mechanism and offers more to the students than the structured lecture. The flip side of this use of the Group is that the students may find the information they need from the backchannel but at what loss? I believe the learners can miss out on the main channel by interacting and concentrating on the backchannel and then the situation is exacerbated and the cycle begins again.

The students of the Group have shared interests and experiences that go beyond the subjects studied in the lecture. The chatbot is just one of these. The Facebook Group space brings people together who do not ordinarily spend time together. The students have the shared experience of meeting face-to-face for lectures or seminars but within the campus physical environment there is not always time to chat or socialise. External constraints of other lectures to go to, assignments to complete or employment commitments mean that it is not always possible to have space for the socialisation process, which is key here (Wilcox et al., 2005). The Group offers this space for chatter and socialising.

One Group member describes that his time at university would be less social without being a member of the Group, he says, "I think I wouldn't know as many of the people on my course as I do now if it wasn't for Facebook" and goes on to say:

Like, I know I've made good friends, I know I've made friends with who I'm going to be friends for the rest of the time here. I knew I had a chance I was going to find someone who was as crazy as me.

Without the Group the classmates may have met and become friends but this space offers the opportunity to nurture these friendships through constant communication.

In this example, the Group is a focus of interactions between the classmates. The space is constructed by these "interrelations" (Massey, 2005, p.8) between the classmates, a Comment on a Wall post or an invitation to watch TV at a friend's house. The student-initiated nature of this Group could also have a negative impact on a student's social integration into university. The choice not to be on Facebook, or not to be a member of this Group could potentially mean exclusion from many socialisation opportunities and this would be unknown to the Group members as this person would not exist in that space.

What have we learnt from Mike's story?

Space-time // Being academic // Liminal space-time // Being public

The stories I have discussed thus far, have predominantly focused on the use of Facebook in the social and informal spheres of university life. In Mike's story, we see that Facebook is used and embedded in students' studying practices when at university. For some students Facebook is used for "being academic" and Mike is an example of this.

Mike's use of the Facebook Group is as a shared, consistent liminal space-time to return to throughout the day to share and discuss goings on and mutual experiences and concerns. This liminal space-time is constructed of layers of the physical and digital experiences. This can be seen through the use of Facebook as a backchannel to lectures, whereby Facebook is prevalent in the lecture theatres.

The Facebook Group, along with a student's own Profile, is used by Mike and his classmates for peer support. By linking themselves to their networked public to access this support and feedback from their Friends. Access is not time-bounded and so the space-time for support reaches beyond and can supplement the more traditional face-to-face tutorial support offered by staff.

With this there comes a context collapse between social and academic lifeworlds and, as Timmis (2012) suggests, there are many benefits to this collapse of the formal/informal divide, with activities and interactions taking place in the informal transferring to the formal. Although in reality, this dichotomy does not exist so neatly and the line is much more blurred. As boyd (2013) suggests "the line between what is work and what is fun is often complicated". For undergraduate students, this is magnified against what they see as work and fun and how academics and the university institution view these. The use of SNS is not something to be kept separate from work. These are everyday integrated practices. The social supports the academic through the networked public (boyd, 2007b).

Procrastination and play
Space-time // Being social

The discussion that follows is based on the data presented in Ying's story, "STUDY, Y am I still in fb?" in Chapter 4, under these two headings: "socially connected play" and "procrastinating on Facebook? Yes, quite a lot".

The end of the second semester signals final submissions for coursework, another round of exams and more importantly the end of the academic year. I use this section to highlight some themes that were prevalent throughout the whole academic year but are presented at the forefront of my FbF behaviour at this time of year. In this final part of the year, Ying was concerned with consolidating the learning and friendships from the year and this was played out on her Facebook Profile.

The theme of procrastination can be found across the data, from the initial survey through to my FbF stories. Facebook is the "go-to-place" for five of my FbF, when filling time or when "something else" should be being done and there exists a tension in the way my FbF describe their Facebook use, between doing proper work and being on Facebook. They comment that there is always something else they should be doing but they are on Facebook, or they are bored so they will spend time on Facebook. Joking and playing around are often given as the reasons for being on Facebook when my FbF perceived they should not be. All my FbF expressed feeling this way apart from Tomas.

Being social – Socially connected play

At the end of the academic year, there is a three-week time period of exams and, in preparation for these, formal teaching ends two weeks before this. There exists a tension between the use of Facebook at exam time and the need for studying and revising. The playing of Facebook games is a favourite pastime of Josie, Mike and Ying. Ying is the most ardent player. She is competitive in her playing, as she describes:

they recalculate the leader board every week and I try to win a medal and record the highest scores

She plays Zuma Blitz. The game is important to her and she spends a lot of time playing and practising it. Facebook offers many games for a user to choose from and in 2010 these ranged from Mafia Wars to Farmville. Gaming on Facebook is predominantly social, that is, played with or against friends. The most popular games are played by over 40 million monthly active users (www.insidesocialgames.com, 2013). These games are designed to ensure a player returns to play again and again, and this “interaction loop” created by the game designers is there to make sure you return. Farmville is one such game, which involves tending to your crops and interacting with friends or your crops will die. Ying plays Farmville with her mum and in this example her Farmville play is the daily contact she has with her mum. The fun nature of the games and play is important and this constitutes socially connected play (Carrington & Robinson, 2009). Being socially connected with Friends, even when not physically present with them (Davies, 2012), is what Facebook gaming offers.

“Playing” on Facebook does not always take the form of structured game applications like Zuma Blitz. On many occasions for my FbF, the “play” involves identity presentation on Facebook. Purposely presenting an opposite point of view or action to that of your normal Facebook behaviour. This can be seen in the practice of “Frape”: Facebook rape; the act of using someone else’s Facebook Page for amusement. This is where another person gains access to your Facebook account (usually because you left your laptop or phone unattended) and then posts a “fake” Status update, pretending to be you. It also happens through “breaking on to” someone else’s Facebook Profile and pretending to be them. Ying describes:

Over the year I have seen what I would describe as a “fraping” nation that happens a lot! Not much to me, it happened really badly recently, I don’t know if you happened to see the picture of the big naked man that my friend put as my Profile picture as a joke? I was so annoyed.

All of my FbF, bar Tomas, gave me examples in which most people they knew had been Fraped at one time or another over the year. It is seen as annoying, but funny when it happens to someone else.

Frape is a publicly playful connection and it is a common practice I have observed amongst undergraduates. In my experience, the act of Frape did not cause any upset and was not performed maliciously. Moreover, it was about interaction between Friends. It was often undertaken in the same geographic location, the university flat, for example, and the act was quickly discovered, perhaps suggesting that the perpetrator wanted to be found out. Frape Statuses were often Commented upon with “frape” and the re-working of a Friends’ Profile (if the person had time) was a favourite pastime.

Frape could be described as a form of friendly “banter”. Banter is described as mock impoliteness (Haugh & Bousfield, 2012) of “not taking yourself too seriously” (p.1), a fun, playful activity. Leech (1983) suggests that banter shows solidarity between people and fosters social intimacy. Plester and Sayers (2007) identified banter as a style of humour. I see Frape and banter in this way as “liminoid practices” (Turner, 1982). They are rites of passage in which Facebook users and particularly first-year undergraduate students all take part. One needs to be Fraped to be a part of the community and this is a social and liminoid link. Frape is a playful, fun liminoid action (Turner, 1982). By taking part in these Frape activities, there is an element of shared social connection and intimacy.

At exam time, Ying finds there exists a tension between what is seen as inappropriate behaviour of social play on Facebook and the more important serious activity of the revision work in hand. This is in contrast to other times of the year, whereby playing is actively encouraged. Ying explains:

My friend has got rid of Facebook for exams, like a lot of other people I know. They have disabled it for a little while so they can't be distracted. My friend says if you've not got a Facebook then you're talking to people and doing random things when you should be working. I cannot imagine doing that!

Ying’s Friend describes the removal of Facebook to stop her doing the random things she feels distracted her from working. By doing this, it could be said she cut off her social support network for the good of her study. Ying cannot imagine doing this as she told me she sees this network as very important to her.

Space-time – “Procrastinating on Facebook? Yes, quite a lot”.

When studying for exams, Ying finds herself on Facebook more often than not. This frustrated her as she felt she needed to study hard to pass her exams. She told me:

I must study hard. My course is 100% exam so I must pass to continue next year.

She found Facebook was a good place to go to, as she could not concentrate all the time but then got concerned because she spent more time there than she believed she should. She worried she procrastinated there quite a lot:

I'm so bored so I just open Facebook everything. Whenever I don't know what to do. Because Facebook is always there and people are sharing their videos, it's fun to look at those, so I just look at it. I spend more time than I should procrastinating on Facebook. Quite a lot.

Procrastinating on Facebook was more often a social activity as the activity undertaken usually involved interacting with Friends. Procrastination techniques involved writing Status updates and Liking others' Status updates. Ying posted a Status update:

I'm in no mood study! 11 people like this status update. So lazy those ppl, why don't they bother to write a comment? Oh, I guess they would say they are too busy “studying”

This connection, which Ying's Friends made by Liking her Status update, was cause for further procrastination for Ying as the red notification symbol popped up and notified her that her Friends had interacted with her. They may have written a Comment that needed replying to. In this way, Facebook encourages continued interactions between Friends and these perpetuate the Friends' procrastination. Another procrastination technique was exam-related and involved asking “revision questions” to Facebook Friends, such as:

what is "AM-DSB CP"?!?!?! even uncle google couldn't define it!!" Within 30 mins I get 23 comments from a range of my classmates, giving me the answer.

This example could be described as reciprocal procrastination. Whereby the constant interaction between the posters means all of the twenty-three people who commented are being interrupted by the continuing conversation. Writing on a Friend's Wall in response to their interaction is another procrastination practice seen in Ying's story:

Helloooooooooooooo..i'm back on facebook=/ lol. need to study! byeeee! Xx

Facebook was used as space-time for academic procrastination. Ying used interactions and Notifications from and with Friends as an excuse not to work on her University assignments. Academic procrastination is described as "intentionally deferring or delaying work that must be completed" (Schraw et al., 2007, p.12). This was particularly prevalent at exam time. Facebook was the in-between space-time whereby procrastination took place. The tension felt by Ying was that her Facebook use made her feel torn: posting on Facebook "I must study hard", but at the same time gaming and commenting on Friends' Facebook posts and being socially connected.

This use of Facebook was nuanced and was not simply a case of avoiding the site to concentrate on studying. Although Ying described her Facebook use as procrastination, I see what she was doing as supporting her studies. She often talked through a study or revision problem they were stuck on and came to understand a topic in more detail through discussing it with a Friend. It is worth noting here that there are studies that view procrastination in a more negative light (Alexander & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Wäschle, 2014). They propose procrastination can be seen in a loop, which can be difficult to break out of. Added to this are the examples I have given here of Facebook use, which also mimic this interaction loop through gaming or Commenting on Friends' Statuses. I see there being a link between procrastination and boredom. I discussed "I'm so bored" in Section 3 of this Chapter, entitled "disconnection" (see p.171). The boredom that was experienced at the end of Semester One is also experienced at the end of Semester Two but at this time I see the boredom being more linked to academic procrastination to avoid the impending critical exams. If they are failed then the first year may have to be taken again.

What have we learnt from Ying's story?
Space-time // Being social

Both end of semester exam periods I see as being times for disengagement from the normal social life of university, from the pattern of attending lectures and seminars. They are less rigid in the clock-time sense of time keeping but, at this time, a new “when time” practice of working, uninterrupted with 24-hour library access means that students, should they choose, can spend lengthy periods in the library studying (Cheeseman, 2010). It can be a very intense, work-filled time whereby Ying felt that a large proportion of the learning needed to pass exams or to complete assignments took place. This time period often involved time away from face-to-face socialising and the social support this offers was replaced by “being social” on Facebook. In contrast to serious studying, Facebook offers a space for students to play. This play with Friends is socially connected and shows how “being social” is still as important at the end of the academic year as it was at the start. Play has featured throughout the year through gaming on Facebook and also through “liminoid activities” (Turner, 1982), such as the act of Frape. These could be seen as “rites of passage” and the banter of being accepted by your new Friends. These social activities, although predominantly Facebook based, move across the digital into the physical through interacting with another person’s digital device in order to Frape them.

There is a consensus in the data from all of my FbF that Facebook stops you working “properly” when at university. There is a tension between the space-time of Facebook and the space-time of academic study as the two often collide on a student’s laptop. A wide range of activities that could be described as academic procrastination take place on Facebook, but these could also be viewed as informal learning and much can be learned from one’s social connections. There are many social and academic demands on an undergraduate’s time (Kidwell, 2005) and I believe one of the learning experiences of the first year at university is coming to understand the use of one’s time, both as an individual and how that fits in with the expectations of the institution. The practices of playing games and procrastination are not new practices at this end of semester period, they have been ongoing all year. In this way, Facebook could be seen as a liminal, in-between space (Turner, 1967), a space in-between study. This “in-between” nature of Facebook also links to the “betwixt in-betweenness” of the first year at university (Palmer et al., 2009).

Facebook as a research tool

Here follows the discussion of the data presented in Eve's story, "I study Facebook!" in Chapter 4, under the themes of: "How do I observe Facebook?" and "All my friends are here too".

My year of Facebook participant observation was insightful, challenging, exploratory and exhausting. My decision to use Facebook as a research tool was integral to my decision to study first-year undergraduates and their use of Facebook. The two were intrinsically linked in my mind from the outset. I believe my experiences and findings show that many of the cultural practices of students are embedded in their use of Facebook and that, by "hanging out" there, I have been able to experience and observe a few of these. I discussed in detail in Chapter 3, Methodology, my approach to using Facebook as a research site and a research tool and it is not my intention to repeat those discussions here. In this section, I reflect upon my own experiences of the digital ethnography in response to my final research question.

How did I observe Facebook? - possibilities

The focus of my studies was Facebook and, therefore, my predominant field site and starting point for exploring the culture of undergraduate students was this digital environment. This subsequently and reflexively moved across and back and forth between the digital and the physical environments my participants inhabit. My FbF added me as their Friend on Facebook:

RECENT ACTIVITY

Eve is now friends with Ruth Lawrence and 5 other people

Being their Friend on Facebook put me in a position that was different than if I had merely searched for open SNS that they may have kept. I had access to their private and personal Facebook Profile and the information and data held within. This is a very privileged position to be in and I am grateful to my participants for letting me into their lives in this manner. I acknowledge that my time spent in the field and the data I collected would not have been possible without the permission of my FbF. When reflecting upon the possibilities of using Facebook as a research site and tool, I propose that building a

relationship with the participants is key. Towards the end of the study, my interactions with my FbF were bordering on the collaborative ethnographic approach (see Lassiter, 2005), whereby the researcher and participants work side-by-side to develop research in action. My participants were reflective upon their use of Facebook and its relationship with university life and they offered me stories and data, which they felt supported this research area. In this case, as the year progressed, they were interested in hearing about my research approach and compared it to some of the things they were learning in their modules. The notion of undergraduate students as researchers is a fairly new concept (www.shef.ac.uk) but in the area of student engagement and understanding the everyday lives of students I believe this would be an excellent approach for future research to take.

In the future, I can see that the use of Facebook as a research tool to observe participants and produce research work therefrom would be useful and beneficial. A Facebook Group could offer a closed private space for a digital focus group to take place. An auto-ethnographic study of one's own Facebook could also be an interesting approach to take, whereby my FbF could have reflected upon their own Profile at the end of the year and that could have formed the basis of one of the data sets.

I believe the use of Facebook was one of the strengths of this study, in terms of getting and keeping my FbF interested and continually engaged in the study.

All my friends are here too - limitations

Through the use of my own existing Facebook Profile as my research site, I made a decision early on in my research career that has had far reaching consequences. My research self and my personal self often collided together without me realising:

My friend Ruth asks "What's all this about adverts eve the facebook queen?! Is it a scam or are we meant to be blocking adverts in our settings???" X

Among my friends I am the "all-seeing eye" of Facebook and I tend to get Facebook-related questions through my Wall from my Friends. The range of Friends I have on Facebook were involved in the study, if not explicitly so then through the participation I had from my FbF:

Mike commented on my status update

My FbF comments and interactions are sporadic and I imagine that most of my Friends did not even notice, as they do not all know each other. However, as a result of these interactions I:

Changed my privacy settings.

To ensure all parties were supported and that my Friends' personal information was not viewable by my FbF.

The amount of time spent viewing my FbF profiles was significant. However, I do not believe that this is linked with my choice to use my own Facebook Profile but more to do with the pervasive and always on nature of Facebook in my life. The habitual nature by which I visit the site has influenced the amount of time I spend as a participant observer. As the study progressed and I got to know my FbF more closely, I was drawn to their Profiles, as I wanted to know what they were up to and how they were getting on at university. This always on nature of Facebook could be perceived as a negative aspect of using Facebook as a research tool.

I propose that a multi-sited approach to ethnography is a useful approach to take when researching digital spaces. In this study, the cultures of Higher Education and Facebook use in the UK were explored using a preferred method of a 'connective ethnography' (Hine, 2000; Fields & Kafai, 2009; Leader & McKim, 2003), as I believe we should pay attention to the socially-constructed nature of space and the way in which people flow between the digital and physical spheres when looking at the world of Higher Education. Although the use of Facebook comes with risks and limitations, I believe the benefits outweigh the negative aspects, which is similar to the findings of Baker (2013). In my opinion, Facebook offers unrivaled access to a part of undergraduates' experiences at university without living the life of an undergraduate (see Nathan, 2005 and Cheeseman, 2008). Participant observation on Facebook enabled me to come to know much of what my FbF experienced.

The longitudinal study of Facebook use is still a fairly new research area and, as more studies are published, a research framework for studying the site is becoming clearer. One difficulty in carrying out research on Facebook is the changing nature of the interface of the site. I touched upon this issue in the conclusion of the Methodology section but I feel it is pertinent to repeat it here. As a researcher of Facebook, it is imperative to contextualise your study findings through documenting clearly the date and what the interface of Facebook was at that time. This, in turn, supports other researchers when they draw upon your data for comparison.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS



Why waste your time on Facebook?

This study has been a temporal analysis of first-year undergraduate students and their use of Facebook in their transition to university. The everyday practices of six students have been explored alongside the responses from a large-scale questionnaire.

To conclude the thesis, this chapter draws together key findings under five main areas. In the first (5.1) I review the data and analysis in relation to my research questions. The second (5.2) I use to evaluate the study and findings with the benefit of hindsight and reflect upon my research approach, I also discuss potential areas for further research. In the third (5.3) I present what the study contributes to educational knowledge and understanding and then go on to discuss the implications of these findings for practice and research (5.4). I conclude with some closing thoughts on the study. These are tentative findings as a result of my time spent in the field and at a micro level, offering those interested in HE, digital technologies and student lives some insights into the experiences of a few students based at a Northern university in the UK.

5.1 Research findings

This study has presented a range of findings, which show that for some students, much of what happens in the everyday of Higher Education happens on and through Facebook. Much time is spent there. But time spent “there” is never in isolation. Facebook is a multiplicity of the student experience, a layer of life. It weaves its way between digital devices and the physical environment.

This study was a mixed-method study that explored the everyday lives of my Facebook Friends through a year-long connective ethnography on Facebook and face-to-face. The findings were presented as The Facebook Landscape and the Topology of Facebook to give a contextual overview of Facebook use using the questionnaire responses. The narratives of Facebook use, which I presented in my FbF stories, each speak of a different time period within the academic year. The discussions of the six themes of analysis were presented under two meta themes of Time and Social. I drew on these to answer my research questions (see p.4). The findings are presented under two analytical frameworks; the first uses different concepts of time to explore the relationship between student life and Facebook and the second uses different notions of social support to understand the importance of people and relationships and how these do or do not support students at what can be a difficult time of their lives.

5.1.1 What role does Facebook play in the lives of transitioning students?

For some, but not all students, Facebook features in their lives in this transition period. Facebook impacts on these students’ lives in a number of ways, mostly in their social interactions but for some in their learning and teaching interactions. The relationship between Facebook and students lives is complex and layered. Facebook use over the academic year is, for the majority of my FbF, a constant and yet multi-layered activity.

The lives of first-year students can be complex and involves coming to understand their role and the management of both their social and their academic lives. We know that social support is important at this time of transition (Wilcox et al., 2005) and one of the roles of Facebook is to offer a space-time for social support. This begins in the pre-university period, before the students arrive in the campus environment. Facebook links the social worlds and Friends of “home” and “uni” in one context collapse (boyd & Marwick,

2011) and for most students it is helpful to have all one's contacts in one space-time, within their university ecology. Facebook is the go-to space to find out and organise life at university, from a night out to timetable changes.

Play is important and Facebook offers a liminoid play space-time where interactions build to support the challenging negotiation of becoming a student. This play is socially connected and Facebook is a shared space that some students return to and build their playful support network. This is shown in Mike's story. In this case, the Facebook Group mixes both social and academic experiences.

5.1.2 Can we learn anything new about transition from looking at students' Facebook Profiles?

The first year at university has been described as a transition period whereby students are "betwixt and between" their life before and life at university (Palmer et al., 2009). The first year is about becoming a student and the navigation of change (Gale and Parker, 2012).

The transition period begins much before the students set foot on campus through a range of digital interactions. Many of these take place on Facebook through the joining of Facebook Groups or Pages that are affiliated with university departments, particular courses, the Students' Union or student Halls of residence. In this way, Facebook is used as a support mechanism to help the students navigate change, as can be seen in Ruth's story, "Making Friends in the digital". The experience of transition is unnerving (Barnett, 2007; Gourlay, 2009 and Longden, 2008) and by connecting with the people and places before coming into contact with them in the physical environment, a certain level of self-confidence can be developed in taking on this change.

Drawing on the work of Lemke (2000) and Turner (1967), Facebook could be seen as an ecosocial system with liminal spaces within. In this study, the data shows that there are many uses of in-between times and spaces in the first-year experience and in the ways that the participants navigate and negotiate Facebook in their first year at university. There is a link between the in-betweenness of Facebook and the in-betweenness of the first-year experience at university. Facebook can be seen as a liminal, in-between space: in-between home and university; in-between "uni life" and "academic life" and in-between

friends and Facebook Friends. These spaces are important to my FbF in exploring the new experiences this transition period brings.

Facebook offers a space-time whereby “significant others” (Nora, 2001, p.50) can offer support and encouragement throughout the first-year adjustment period. Managing transition is supported by social interactions and, as detailed in Sally’s story, this management can involve Facebook as it connects the students to their social networks inside and outside the university campus as well as inside and outside the digital sphere. There are a range of connections who can, if needed, offer support 24 hours a day. These significant others may be a mum, a sister, a best friend, a classmate or a lecturer and Facebook can be the space-time to access them.

Within Facebook use, there is a layered experience of formal and informal learning, as contexts collapse and collide. This echoes Tucker’s (1999) notion of a “sense of community” (p.169), weaving between the “indistinguishable” lived experiences of the academic and social spheres of university life and Longden’s (2008) notion that these are interdependent. This can be seen in the stories of Josie and Mike who both used Facebook in this manner to negotiate the increasingly blurred contexts of their lives. I have tried to interpret the meaning here.

By looking at my FbF Facebook Profiles over the whole academic year, I have seen that the transition period is a longer acclimatisation process (Brooman and Darwent, 2013) over the year, rather than the single week of induction. This was shown in the use of the Facebook Profile when it was employed as a reflection tool by my FbF to view and review the comings and goings of their everyday lives and experiences. Often these experiences do not compare to the students’ expectations of university life (Haggis, 2006), as was seen in Tomas’ story.

Facebook can be constructed as a solution to some of the dilemmas for students when faced with what seems to have been a liminal and unstructured time period of their lives. The notion of social integration, although challenged by some, is still perceived as an important influencer to a student’s success within the first year at university (Brooman and Darwent, 2013). In future research, it would be wise to focus research attention on the range of communication tools that students are using (including Facebook) to manage and

negotiate these support relationships and how these may be developed between a range of staff and students.

5.1.3 Can we learn anything new about students' experiences in HE from considering the role of time in students' lives?

By using the lens of time to explore the student experience of HE, I have drawn upon Adam (1985) and Massey (1995) with their notions of the social analysis of time and space-time, respectively.

I have found Adam's (1985) notion of "when time" particularly helpful in understanding the experiences of my FbF. The when time structure within the academic year is constructed as semesters to order the teaching. It begins with Fresher's week and ends with the final exam period. These when time activities give structure to the students' experiences. Structure is important to students. This can be seen in Josie's story. She fills her life with many activities and often feels overwhelmed by how much she has to do. She finds it difficult when life is not tangible, organised and timetabled. Last minute changes to lectures and sessions are received with scorn and a belief that the university is poorly organised and managed. Much of Josie's time is filled with extra curricular activities and through these she has, I believe, a perceived sense of control.

Boredom and procrastination were emerging themes that I did not expect to find in the data. Many of my FbF and stories they told were about spare time, being bored and the mismanagement of time. I believe this is linked to the students' perceptions about a lack of structure and organisation existing at university. Students need more support to help them deal with the time they have. There is a stark difference between Josie and Tomas' stories. Both were highly motivated students but Josie was engaged and connected and Tomas was not.

As I mentioned previously, Facebook is a liminal space where students (can) break free of learned clock time practices. University and Facebook both offer spaces for the myriad temporal experiences to be explored. If I examine this definition in the context of my study, both university and Facebook are liminal spaces offering (new) students a place to play with social hierarchies, be imaginative, and play out uncertainties and their emotions but often they are unsure of how to do this.

Drawing on Massey's (1995) notion of the multiplicities of space-times, which exist through social construction, I have proposed that Facebook is one of the space-times in which students experience HE. Facebook disrupts the space-times of the university as a new authoritative space, where "expert" students are on hand 24/7 to help and give feedback. The boundaries of HE have always gone beyond the confines of university buildings, but the use of Facebook means this has become the norm for many students. For some students, Facebook is a major part of the student experience when at university. Although students share this practice it is by no means a homogeneous approach taken by all but using Facebook is a dominant space-time activity. Students engage with the university in various scales of interaction. Some to a lesser extent than others and I do not believe there is a plurality of first year experience.

5.1.4 How useful is time as an analytical tool when researching Facebook?

The use of time as an analytical tool, as I mentioned in Chapter 3, was a concept that arose from time spent in the field and the data from my FbF. Time was a frequently encountered topic of discussion, whether in terms of procrastination or spending all one's time on Facebook.

Facebook, by its very nature, tracks time. Everything is time stamped and each user's information is presented in reverse chronological order. The new interface that was introduced in 2011 is called a "Timeline" and this displays a user's interactions on Facebook right back to when they joined the site (and beyond, if you upload the information). Facebook is organised using calendar and clock time. These mark each user's interactions and also help users plan events. The interface looks back to the past and at the same time documents the future. Real-time instant behaviours are common, through the Chat function or the presence of the green "online" notification, although Facebook will save these for later if a person is unavailable. However, Facebook has been described as always "acting in the now" (Harper et al., 2012; Miller, 2011) making it difficult for users to move forward and onwards, trapping them in the identity of the moment, and in some ways this "nowness" of Facebook can also be a dominant influence when researching Facebook. It lends itself to constraining research methods to measurement

and counting, such as using temporal markers of “time spent” on Facebook or screen casts and surveillance of actual time spent versus self-reported time spent. All of these are valid methods of data collection but do not push beyond the architecture of the site to interrogate the more delicate nuanced uses of the site. I believe that in this study, by using a range of different temporal concepts, these have enabled me to look beyond the dominant temporal structure of clock and calendar time of Facebook and I consider this to be important, as these structures are so dominant.

5.1.5 What are the possibilities and limitations of Facebook as a research site and a research tool?

Throughout this study, one of my primary objectives was to explore what Facebook had to offer as a research site and as a research tool. My previous study of Facebook use (Stirling, 2009) was the starting point for me to explore the possibilities and limitations of Facebook in more depth. The 2009 study was a small study and focused on the digital site of Facebook only. Over the last four years, the use of digital research methods as a legitimate methodology in the social sciences has become more widespread (NCRM, 2012) and my research output is timely in response to this “digital turn” in research approaches (Quinnell, 2012). That said, small-scale ethnographic and narrative studies are still very much in the minority and it will take time for a range of longitudinal studies of Facebook use to be published (see current work by Daniel Miller & UCL, 2013).

My choice to use Facebook as a research site was linked to my research approach of exploring the cultural practices of students’ Facebook use across the digital and physical environments. The focus of my study was Facebook and, therefore, this was my predominant ethnographic field site and starting point for exploring the culture of undergraduate students. This subsequently and reflexively moved across and back and forth between the digital and the physical environments my participants inhabited.

A key lesson I learnt was that Facebook can be a successful research site but that the researcher must have an understanding of the architecture of the site and the privacy settings before starting to research there. To be an “insider” from the outset is preferable but even then, one can never be inside all of a user’s interactions. For researchers new to Facebook, I would recommend a period of acclimatisation to the site and its practices before embarking on fieldwork.

Facebook is an ever changing website, responding to business needs and users' interactions. Over the time I have been studying Facebook, the site has developed from a small niche start up to a billion dollar company, whose shares you can buy on the stock market. For me, these changes make it an even more interesting research site to explore. My understanding of the site has changed and I am now much more aware and wary of the power structures that exist between the website and the wider audience of users.

Some of the challenges and limitations of using Facebook as a research site relate directly to my subsequent discussion. Facebook, the company, protects its assets. There are now very strict guidelines regarding the use of the Facebook logo and the "brand assets" (Facebook, 2013) as I discussed in the ethics sections (p.61). In the early days of the website these did not exist and the social practices that went on there were new and developing (arguably they are still in this process). Now the company has very clear definitions of what "Like", "Tag" or "Comment" mean. Social norms are beginning to develop and it seems from these brand asset definitions that there are expectations from Facebook that users will behave and use these "tools" in a certain manner. Although these behaviours are also negotiated amongst Friends, as discussed in Sally's story (see also the work of Davies, 2012), I see this as challenging the use of Facebook as a research site in that there are powerful structures controlling and shaping social behaviours.

The decision to use Facebook as a research tool, as well as the research site, built upon my previous experience of using Facebook Chat to undertake interviews with participants (Stirling, 2009). Facebook offered a range of methods, which included participant observation of Facebook Profiles (Status, Wall & Photos), participant observation of Facebook Groups, digital screen shots of critical incidences and interviews with participants using Facebook Chat. Facebook as a research tool can afford both synchronous and asynchronous participant observation. Through being a member of a closed Facebook Group, I was able to view synchronous Facebook Chat between a group of six students, which took place while the students were in a lecture. This was a backchannel discussion to the main lecture and took place without the lecturer's knowledge. Some of the challenges of using Facebook as a research tool I believe are linked to the far reach of Facebook. Within the confines of a study on Facebook there are open public Pages, closed secret Groups and a varying range of Profiles in between.

While of course offering me an excellent view of the cultural practices of the student participants, a disadvantage of this was the pure amount of data that it was possible for me to see, and the decisions relating to where I would draw the boundary of my study. For example, a paper printout of each participant's Facebook Profile may be between 50 to 500 pages of A4, for a 6-month period. The vast amount of data that can be observed when undertaking an ethnography on Facebook means that the researcher can, if they wish, observe all the data (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). There becomes no cut off, no down time. If the researcher uses their own personal Facebook Profile to undertake the research this can be problematic, as the research life and personal life become intertwined.

The Facebook interface comprises public (to Friends) and private spaces. The Messages (emails) are not accessible (apart from the ones between myself and the participants) and Facebook Chat conversations are also not viewable (unless between myself or in the case of the Group chat). The participant would have to agree to these "private" areas being observed through either sending copies of specific messages or the use of screen cast technology. There are many other methods available to study Facebook, which I did not use but am interested to explore in future projects. The use of a video screen-cast of the user's computer screen would allow me to view the participant's movements within and outside of Facebook. Which order do they navigate the site? And what is the relationship between Facebook and the other websites and computer programs they are running, in order to be able to answer the question, "what tasks is Facebook embedded within?"

My research has focused very specifically on Facebook practices with the university context and I believe to study the digital practices alone would be insufficient. It was important in this study to observe the Facebook practices alongside the face-to-face to gain a broader context of the university and Facebook landscape.

5.2 A critical reflection on the study and its findings

The research approach taken in this study was influenced, as discussed previously, by the ethnographic work of other Internet scholars, such as Tom Boellstorff (2008) and danah boyd (2008). In this section, I reflect upon the choices I made about the study design and, through hindsight, ponder whether my choices would have been different. By taking a

connective ethnographic view of Facebook use, I was able to see a couple of different viewpoints, from the actual Profile interaction and the perceived way it was used through talking to my FbF. This allowed the different faces of the experience to be explored and compared. My choice to use a large scale, population questionnaire to ask for volunteers was a surprise success of this study. Originally, I intended the questionnaire to offer me volunteers to take part in the ethnography and perhaps a small amount of data to give a supporting contextual flavour of more general undergraduate use. But the large dataset I ended up collecting offered a good range of responses to create the illustrations and data within the Facebook Landscape section, giving a contextual overview to the following FbF stories. I believe these different datasets offered a multi-dimensional view on the phenomenon of Facebook use. They were integrated to create a detailed understanding of Facebook in this context. I would certainly take a mixed method approach to future studies of Facebook and HE.

The stories of my FbF form a substantial part of my claim to new knowledge in this thesis and I take this opportunity to reflect upon the process of creating the stories, how I shaped the data through the decisions I made about which quotes and which Status updates I used and in which order I presented them. This process had an influence on the knowledge created. For me, it was important for each story to have the feel and tone of that FbF and while I was writing the stories I listened back to my recording of the interviews and reread each FbF Facebook Profile. I tried to use data that was time-appropriate to the segment of the academic year that I was discussing to match with the key themes of that time period. If another person had looked at the same raw dataset they may have chosen a different range of quotes to construct a different narrative. Throughout the research project, I made decisions to make sense of the complexities of the research phenomenon and had I made different decisions I am sure the project would have altered. If I had continued to only look at the digital environment of Facebook, as opposed to both the digital and meeting face-to-face, I would have gathered a different picture of some of my FbF. Sally, for example, did not post very frequently on Facebook but face-to-face she described herself as being on Facebook “all the time”.

I believe one of the project successes was my decision to email new students before they set foot on the university campus. I think the timing of this helped me gain the number of interested responses I did. I imagine if I had undertaken the questionnaire either at a later

date or via a paper-based questionnaire that my response rate would have been much lower due to students being too busy to take part. My FbF tell me there is a certain ennui relating to the university email volunteer list and that students get fed up of being bombarded to take part in research studies. I did get a small sample of questionnaire respondents who did not use Facebook but were interested in taking part further in the research. I decided not to follow up these participants and to concentrate on the heavy users of Facebook. I believe this sample of disconnected students would have given me a very different perspective of HE and transition and to document their non-use of Facebook would have been interesting but would not have answered my initial research questions of “how and why do undergraduates use Facebook?”

Through describing the context of the study and the methods I undertook (in the Methodology Chapter) I hope that, although generalisations should not be made from the study, others could replicate my methods with another group of FbF.

5.2.1 Limitations

There will always be limitations within the scope of a PhD study. This study is a small one and I am a fairly new researcher but I have tried to build upon my experiences and understanding of researching Facebook over the last four years. Ellison and boyd (2013) ask researchers to “clearly articulate the assumptions and biases of their methods” (p.169). My study had a methodological slant with two methodological research questions and I believe my somewhat unusually lengthy Methodology Chapter in this thesis has gone some way to articulating these assumptions and biases.

The questionnaire achieved a fairly good response rate (15% of the population) with which to develop the basis of the contextual Facebook usage data and, although it included self-reporting, this was countered with the ethnographic data and visa versa to give typical views of student Facebook use in HE. This study used a small sample in a northern Russell Group university of students aged 18-21. The data and findings should not be taken to be generalisable when evaluating the findings and applicability of the research. I acknowledge that there is not homogeneity of student experience of HE or of Facebook use and that, by only focusing on 18-21 year olds, I am excluding a proportion of students who fall into the widening access to HE category. It could be argued that transition for these students could be a more beneficial research topic (as they are in a minority) but the

aim of this study was always to explore in detail the views of a few heavy users of Facebook and through the volunteer sampling all volunteers fell into the 18-21 age category. This study should also not be used to make generalisations about other SNS usage, as boyd (2009) states “we cannot assume transitivity either in terms of structure or theory” between different SNS. This study looks at Facebook usage only and it should not be assumed these findings are transferrable to other student usage of another SNS. In future studies, I would like to follow participants across the different digital spaces they inhabit to see what the digital fabric and wider environment of an HE student is.

Throughout this study, I have always been aware that as I was working within a new field of study, with terminologies changing as fast as the digital technologies I was documenting. My aim was to document and analyse the realities of technology use and to do this I have kept up to date with changes but tried to ensure the key themes and influences are included. The use of the term Web 2.0 is an example. When I embarked on this study, the term was common and used in conjunction with HE learning and teaching but it is less salient today than it was in 2009. I have been working within a fluid and somewhat changeable landscape. Ellison and boyd (2013) suggest researchers of social media do not “become too enamored with these new systems” (p.169), by being critical and taking time to understand the social practices and the technology. I have tried to be true to my documentation of Facebook practices in 2010 and not to be influenced by the newer interfaces and communication and interaction practices, which have developed over the three years I have been analysing and writing up the data, but I acknowledge this is a difficult and troublesome approach.

5.2.2 Future work

There is much scope for further work in the areas of digital technology use and student engagement and the student experience, and further work exploring Facebook use. Not least because of the continuing usage of the site by university students of varying ages.

In the short term, I would like to replicate this study four years on. Once more exploring the first-year transition and Facebook. I propose that students, who start university in 2014, may have been Facebook members for at least five years and I believe their practices and behaviours would be interesting to study, as they deal with becoming new students. In the future, a research area I am interested in is Facebook lifecycles. That is, how Facebook is

used at different stages of a person's life as a direct follow-on from this study, still taking the notion of transition focusing on transition from university to what comes next, employment or further study, and how Facebook practices feature within this new life stage. I have also contemplated exploring this same dataset using Actor Network Theory (Latour, 2005) and to explore Facebook as an actor within the ethnography. What narratives about HE does Facebook experience and what stories would Facebook tell?

More broadly, this study has continued my interest in social media use in HE by both staff and students. This is still a nascent, developing field in which stakeholders are responding in different ways. For example, some institutions have banned the use of official Facebook Pages and others in contrast are heavily promoting their use. New digital technologies and environments are continuing to develop such as MOOCs (Massively Open Online Communities), and there is a continuing increase in the use of mobile technologies, smart phones and tablets within the university environment. Anecdotally, I have observed a move by students to more transient social spaces of smart phone apps, such as Snapchat and What's App, but these do not offer the same interactional affordances that Facebook does (private synchronous chat, for example). I still see these differing technologies as part of the digital environment of students and I would hope I can continue to research the everyday uses of these by students and develop a study, which can track the movement across the digital interfaces of some or all of the spaces mentioned. I have found using time as an analytical framework with which to view HE a helpful one and going forward I can see that using it to explore students' feelings about the rise in fees to £9000 could be useful. Bradley et al. (2013) found that their participants were concerned with the costs of each seminar and lecture and were unhappy if they were cancelled. Anecdotally, I have heard of students being refunded for lost teaching time due to industrial action by academic staff. To ask students directly about how they spend their time at university and whether they equate time with money spent would be an interesting avenue to explore.

Finally, I am continually fascinated in inter- and multi-disciplinary projects and methodologies that use innovative ways of knowing, for example, I am interested in making a full-size installation model of Facebook to use as an elicitation tool to talk to participants about digital spaces and Facebook use.

5.3 Main conclusions and contribution to knowledge

This section presents a summary of my main conclusions and highlights what I believe to be my contribution to knowledge from this study.

The study aimed to explore the actualities of Facebook use, HE transition and student experience based on the lived realities of student experience (Gale and Parker, 2012), particularly focusing on longitudinal research using Facebook as one of the research sites and as a research tool. The study aimed to take an in-depth micro view of first-year undergraduates and used a time-based analytical framework to explore the new learned temporal experiences (Adam, 1982).

The findings highlighted the nuanced use of Facebook throughout the academic year across the social and academic life worlds of my FbF. Facebook is used for making friends, organising social and academic engagements, managing ongoing relationships between friends, to support academic study through peer support, to play and as a liminal space inbetween all of these activities. It is particularly important to note in these cases that the use of Facebook bridges many different spaces, both physical and digital and also spans different timescales directly linked to the spaces (Lemke, 2000). Time is destabilised at university and Facebook highlights this through the always-on nature of the site. Access to peers and Friends is not time-bounded. The always-on nature of digital technologies and the constant feedback offered by peers could influence learning and teaching practices. In the UK, the current three-week turn around for feedback on assessed work seems an age in a space where an unanswered Message on Facebook cannot be left for even a day. The integration of social media into everyday life can mean for some students a blurring between the professional and the personal identities.

A further contribution is methodological. This study took a mixed method, connective ethnographic approach that moved across the digital and physical spaces of HE. The study set out to use nascent methods and explore Facebook longitudinally using it as a research tool as well as the research site. The findings have shown that, by mixing digital and face-to-face data, a more nuanced understanding of Facebook use can be reached. Ways of coming to know were inspired by inter-disciplinary approaches and design methodologies to create an approach, which was responsive to the fluid field of study. The study also used innovative data presentation, drawing on visual data presentation

techniques, such as information graphics and 3D card modeling, to make sense of the complexities of social life as well as to aid the communication of these complexities to a wider audience. In this manner, the contribution is to show how data can be presented in ways besides the written form.

5.4 Implications

I believe the findings of this study have a range of implications, which could influence students, academic staff and researchers in the future. These are detailed below.

The importance of social integration (Wilcox et al., 2005) has already been presented and is acknowledged as being an important factor in retaining students within the university. However, the findings in Tomas' story regarding disconnection and boredom show that there is not a homogeneous approach to social integration; that the somewhat dominant discourse of drinking and partying does not suit all students but, in fact, alienates students and excludes them from belonging to the university. Alongside this, Tomas's story shows an example of students wishing for a more challenging academic environment where they are busy more of the time. I would encourage student support staff and also academic staff to support students to understand the temporal changes that can take place in the first year at university and how to navigate these changes. This could be undertaken through the use of "when time" experiences to illustrate the different temporal experiences taking place at university and explore these concepts with students prior to starting university, or very early on in the first semester, communicating to them the different timescales that exist at university and in their social lives. Socially, students may be used to instant feedback and interaction but this is not always appropriate within the university system.

If the notion of student engagement develops and comes to the forefront of university administration and the focus of academic staff then the lived realities of students, including the many ways in which students are engaged with Facebook, would be an area to understand in more detail.

5.5 Closing thoughts

At the present time, Facebook is still ubiquitous within the digital environment of the undergraduate student. For some students aged 18-21, living away from home for the first time, Facebook is a constant presence in their lives and acts in a range of support roles and mechanisms. Yet at the same time it creates tensions in relation to its use, through a perceived misuse of time spent there or the “always-on” nature of the site in a student’s life. Facebook is the backdrop to many students’ university experience and I believe much can be learnt from engaging in in-depth research with undergraduates about their lives and how they make sense of becoming a university student. The pasts, presents and futures of these students are to some extent played out on and through Facebook.

This collective behaviour of Facebook shown in this study is dominant, although not exclusive, throughout the student body and therefore these findings should not be over privileged. That said, this study has also shown that for some students there are negative associations to Facebook use being seen as a norm and that not being a member of the site can mean you are disconnected and disengaged from the student experience. Going to university is a challenging endeavour and navigating both the social and academic experiences, times and changes that take place in students’ everyday lives are, I believe, important themes for further research within the UK HE system.

I believe this study has shown some of the potentials and limitations of the use of Facebook as a longitudinal research site and this is important and timely, particularly in light of the blurring of the digital and physical environments taking place through the pervasive nature of mobile technologies. In the future, the development and use of Facebook as a research tool offers a range of opportunities to researchers exploring many facets of social life but these come with responsibilities for the researcher, of making ethical decisions about working within the parameters of a site owned by a global corporation.

As the relationship between Higher Education and Facebook continues and develops, Facebook remains a part of the social life of many students. I believe social researchers should continue to pay attention to its ubiquitous nature but, more interesting, are the wide ranging practices of student engagement that go on there while students *waste their time on Facebook*.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

account	A Facebook account is the sum total of all the information a user owns on Facebook, including the login and password information, the profile, the privacy settings, etc.
add	(verb) -- refers to the action of adding an application to your profile. Can also refer to adding a photo to an album, or adding a friend to your list of friends.
admin	An admin is a person who's in charge of a group or page. When you create a group, you are automatically listed as both an admin and the group's creator. Admins can invite people to join the group, appoint other admins, and edit group information and content. They can also remove members and other admins.
application	An application is anything built on top of the social graph through Facebook platform. Users manually add applications to their accounts. Most Facebook-built applications are pre-added to users' accounts.
chat	An instant message (IM) service, which allows you to type instant messages to your friends who are also online.
comment	Comment is one of the options for users to give feedback on another user's activity, either status updates, photographs or other activity. Clicking "Comment" opens up a text box underneath the activity for you to write in.
culling	Friends can be "culled" or deleted if you no longer wish them to have access to your profile.
deleting	See also "culling" (above).
event	A calendar-based resource that users can add to their profiles, pages and groups that lets them share news about upcoming affairs or social gatherings.
fan	A person who has "liked" and therefore joined a page because they like what that page represents.
filters	Used to separate friends into different categories, these can be friendship groups e.g. work colleagues, family members. The filter allows the user to limit what each category sees if they wish (see also limited profile).
friend	The people a user connects with through Facebook are their friends. A user can ask people to accept their friend request. Generally users know the "friend" and have met them face-to-face, but not always.

friend request	A person must be invited or ask to be your friend, this is a friend request. This can be accepted and the user can see the amount of your profile you decide (see filter) or the request can be "ignored". If a request is ignored the user may not realise as no message is sent to that effect.
friend lists	A user can use friend lists to filter the News Feed and this can limit the status updates and postings about different friends.
group	A group is the place for small group communication and for people to share their common interests and express their opinion. It is aimed at non-commercial use.
IM (instant message)	An instant message is a real-time typed message, similar to MSN.
inbox	This is a private email service and users can email their Facebook friends.
like	A feature that appears as a link next to something you see on Facebook that allows users to let others know they appreciate that something, whether it be a video, a comment or something else.
limited profile	A profile that allows only restricted access to a user's profile, for example, a user can choose to limit the access to their photos.
member	A person who has joined and participates with a group.
messages	A private message service which integrates e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging and chat in one "social inbox" that provides a conversation thread for the same person no matter which messaging method was used at any given time. By default, only friends and their friends come into the inbox.
mini feed	Similar to a News Feed, but the feed is about one user and shows up on their wall and is also posted to the News Feed.
mobile	Facebook Mobile offers multiple Facebook features for the mobile phone, this has a simpler interface.
network	A circle of friends and acquaintances that centres on a city, school, company, or military organisation.
news feed	The News Feed highlights what's happening to your friends. The News Feed is the first thing a user sees upon logging in to Facebook. The News Feed is the main catalyst for all Facebook interaction.
notes	Notes are like mini-blogs for your profile.

notifications	Notifications are sent automatically as other people interact with your profile or respond to your comment.
officer	Honorary appointment. Group admins can add officers to a group. Other than holding a title, officers have no additional privileges beyond regular members. They do <u>not</u> have <u>admin</u> authority.
online	Shown by a green dot
page	A page looks like a personal profile and enables public figures, businesses, organisations and other entities to create an authentic and public presence on Facebook. Unlike your profile, Facebook Pages are visible to everyone on the Internet by default. You, and every person on Facebook, can connect with these Pages by becoming a fan and liking them and then receive their updates in your News Feed and interact with them.
photos	A Facebook application that lets users upload albums of photos, tag friends, and comment on photos.
poke	A poke is a way to interact with your friends on Facebook. It allows one user to virtually poke another. Some consider it flirting.
profile	A profile displays a user's personal information and their interactions with friends. Each registered user may have only one profile.
RSS (feed)	Really Simple Syndication. <u>Wikipedia</u> defines it as a family of Web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works—such as blog entries, news headlines, audio, and video—in a standardised format.
status	<p>A micro-blogging feature, which allows users to inform their friends of their current whereabouts, actions, or thoughts.</p> <p>There is a text field at the top of the home page and the profile page that asks, "What's on your mind?" (formerly "What are you doing right now?"). If you type text in the box and click "Share" (or "Post"), the text will become your new status message (e.g., "Michelle is writing blog posts about Facebook.").</p> <p>That same field can now be used to share links, photos, etc.: if you add a link or photo by clicking the links directly below the field, the text in the field will instead be attached as a comment from you on the link or photo (instead of updating your status).</p>

tabs	<p>Tabs mark the different sections of a profile.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. • The Info tab displays basic information like Birthday and Hometown, as well as interests and activities. The Info tab also lists all groups the user is a member of, and all the pages the user is a fan of. 2. • The Wall tab displays the user's interactions with friends (comments and messages) as well as status messages. 3. • The Photos tab displays profile photos and albums. 4. • The Boxes tab displays all of the applications and features not showcased elsewhere on the profile. 5. • Other tabs Users can feature their applications by creating a tab unique to that application.
tag	<p>When uploading photos to Facebook you can select and "tag" individuals through clicking and selecting their name. Tagging a friend in one of your photos links the photo to their Facebook wall and photo tab.</p>
translations	<p>A Facebook application that allows translators from around world to translate Facebook into different languages.</p>
updates	<p><u>News Feeds</u> sent to you from pages that you have joined.</p>
video	<p>A Facebook application that lets users share videos on Facebook. Additionally, users can "tag" their friends in videos they add, much like the way users can tag their friends in photos.</p>
wall	<p>A featured section inside a Facebook profile. It is a space on every user's profile page that allows friends and users themselves to post messages for all to see.</p>

APPENDIX

1. Questionnaire August 2010

Facebook questions

<http://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?hl=en&formkey=dH...>

Facebook questions

I am conducting a research study looking at students Facebook habits. Please take a moment to answer these quick questions on your Facebook usage and your feelings about Facebook. The analysis of these answers will be used as background information for a larger in depth study. If you are interested in taking part in this study please leave your contact details at the end of this questionnaire. All answers are anonymous, data gathered from this questionnaire will be used for academic purposes only. This study has received ethical approval from the University of Sheffield School of Education Research Ethics Committee. Thank you very much for taking part.
eve stirling

* Required

1. Facebook makes me feel... *

one word answer

2. ...because... *

explain why you feel this way

3. Do you use Facebook? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Continue »

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If the participant answers yes, they see this:

Facebook questions

* Required

4. How many times did you look at Facebook yesterday?

5. How did you access Facebook yesterday

check all that apply

☐ desktop pc

☐ mobile phone

☐ laptop

☐ Other:

6. Where did you access Facebook yesterday?

check all that apply

☐ Home

☐ Work

☐ School

☐ Other:

7. Why did you access Facebook yesterday?

check all that apply

☐ check news feed

☐ to look at your profile

☐ write on someone else's wall

☐ to poke someone

☐ to use chat

☐ to upload photos

☐ play a game

☐ to post something to your wall

☐ to set up a group

- ☐ to update your status
- ☐ to check your inbox
- ☐ to upload a video
- ☐ to join a group
- ☐ to become a fan
- ☐ to share a story
- ☐ Other:

8. Have you used Facebook in relation to starting university in September?

check all that apply

- ☐ joined a group for accommodation
- ☐ joined a group for your course
- ☐ made friends with an existing university student
- ☐ joined a student services group
- ☐ Other:

9. What excites you about Facebook?

10. What worries you about Facebook?

*Are you male or female? **

- ☐ male
- ☐ female

*How old are you? **

- ☐ under 18
- ☐ 18-20
- ☐ 21-25
- ☐ 26-30
- ☐ 30+

Ethnic background

- ☐ White - British
- ☐ White - Irish
- ☐ Asian or Asian British - Bangladesh
- ☐ Chinese or other ethnic background - Chinese
- ☐ White - other background
- ☐ Asian - other background
- ☐ Black or Black British - Caribbean
- ☐ Mixed - White and Black Caribbean
- ☐ Black or Black British - African
- ☐ Mixed - White and Black African
- ☐ Black - other background
- ☐ Mixed - White and Asian
- ☐ Asian or Asian British - Indian
- ☐ Mixed - other background
- ☐ Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
- ☐ Other ethnic background

What is your student status?

- ☐ UK
- ☐ International

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Facebook questions

Thank you for taking part. This questionnaire is part of a larger study looking at undergraduate first year university students and their Facebook habits. If you are interested in taking part in further research please leave your contact details. Your name will not be associated with this data.

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If the participant answers no, they see this:

Facebook questions

<https://spreadsheets.google.com/formResponse?formkey=dHp...>

Facebook questions

* Required

3. ...*why not?* *

explain why you don't use Facebook

4. *Do you use any other social networking sites?*

which ones?

Are you male or female? *

- ☐ male
☐ female

How old are you? *

- ☐ under 18
☐ 18-20
☐ 21-25
☐ 26-30
☐ 30+

Ethnic background

- ☐ White - British
☐ White - Irish
☐ Asian or Asian British - Bangladesh
☐ Chinese or other ethnic background - Chinese
☐ White - other background
☐ Asian - other background
☐ Black or Black British - Caribbean
☐ Mixed - White and Black Caribbean

- ☐ Black or Black British - African
- ☐ Mixed - White and Black African
- ☐ Black - other background
- ☐ Mixed - White and Asian
- ☐ Asian or Asian British - Indian
- ☐ Mixed - other background
- ☐ Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
- ☐ Other ethnic background

What is your student status?

- ☐ UK
- ☐ International

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Facebook questions

Thank you for taking part. This questionnaire is part of a larger study looking at undergraduate first year university students and their Facebook habits. If you are interested in taking part in further research please leave your contact details. Your name will not be associated with this data.

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1.2 June 2011 Questionnaire

Facebook questions

27/09/2011 12:53

Facebook questions

Over the last year I have been conducting research into first year undergraduate students use of Facebook for my PhD. You may remember filling in a questionnaire last August about your Facebook use? This questionnaire is the final part of my research and I'd love to hear from you even if you didn't fill in the questionnaire the first time round.

Please take a moment to answer these quick questions on your Facebook usage over the year and your feelings about Facebook. The analysis of these answers will be used as background information for the larger in depth study on students' views and experiences on Facebook in relation to university life.

All answers are anonymous; data gathered from this questionnaire will be used for academic purposes only.
This study has received ethical approval from the University of Sheffield School of Education Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you very much for taking part you have really helped the research.
eve stirling

If you have any questions please get in touch:
eve.stirling@sheffield.ac.uk

* Required

1. *Facebook makes me feel...* *

one word answer

2. *...because...* *

explain why you feel this way

*3. Do you use Facebook? **

☐ Yes

☐ No

Continue »

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Facebook questions

* Required

4. Did you fill in the questionnaire I sent out in August 2010 *

I'm interested to know whether these answers are from new participants or existing ones

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

5. How long have you been a member of Facebook?

in years

6. How many times did you look at Facebook yesterday?

7. How did you look at Facebook yesterday

check all that apply

- ☐ desktop pc
☐ laptop
☐ mobile phone
☐ Other:

8. Where did you look at Facebook yesterday?

check all that apply

- ☐ home (where you live)
☐ university

- ☐ work
- ☐ on the move
- ☐ Other:

9. Why did you look at Facebook yesterday?

check all that apply

- ☐ check your news feed
- ☐ to look at your profile
- ☐ write on someone else's wall
- ☐ to poke someone
- ☐ to use facebook chat
- ☐ to upload photos
- ☐ play a game
- ☐ to post something to your wall
- ☐ to set up a group
- ☐ to update your status
- ☐ to check your inbox
- ☐ to upload a video
- ☐ to join a group
- ☐ to like something
- ☐ to share a story
- ☐ you followed a link from another site
- ☐ Other:

10. Would you say your Facebook use has changed since you started University?

if no, go to Q.11

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

11. If yes, could you describe how?

I know these empty boxes are sometimes hard to write in but I'd really appreciate it if you could write a few examples of how and why your use has changed, thanks!



12. What excites you about Facebook?

13. What worries you about Facebook?

*Are you male or female? **

- ☐ male
☐ female

*How old are you? **

- ☐ under 18
☐ 18-20
☐ 21-25
☐ 26-30
☐ 30+

*Ethnic background **

- ☐ White - British
☐ White - Irish
☐ Asian or Asian British - Bangladesh
☐ Chinese or other ethnic background - Chinese
☐ White - other background
☐ Asian - other background
☐ Black or Black British - Caribbean
☐ Mixed - White and Black Caribbean
☐ Black or Black British - African

- ☐ Mixed - White and Black African
- ☐ Black - other background
- ☐ Mixed - White and Asian
- ☐ Asian or Asian British - Indian
- ☐ Mixed - other background
- ☐ Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
- ☐ Other ethnic background

What is your student status? *

- ☐ UK
- ☐ International

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Facebook questions

* Required

3. ...*why not?* *

explain why you don't use Facebook

4. *Did you stop using Facebook over the last year since starting univerisy?*

Were you a member before? (If no, go to Q.6).

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

5. *If yes, why?*

I know these empty boxes are sometimes hard to write in but I'd really appreciate it if you could write why your use has changed, thanks!

6. *Do you use any other social networking sites?*

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

7. *If yes, which ones?*

Facebook questions

**Thank you for taking part. This questionnaire is part of a larger study looking at undergraduate first year university students and their Facebook habits and your answers have been really helpful. Feel free to email me if you have any questions:
eve.stirling@sheffield.ac.uk**

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2. Ethics documents

2.1 consent form

Consent Form for Research Participants University of Sheffield



Project: THE FUTURE IS SOCIAL: WHY WASTE YOUR TIME ON FACEBOOK?
Date: X
Participant: X

Consent form

Are you happy to take part?

I would like to invite you take part in this research project. Before you decide, please read the information sheet provided.

Please Circle

I have read and understand the information sheet. YES NO

I understand that I can withdraw from this project at any time without giving any reason. YES NO

I am happy for the project researcher to look at my Facebook profile. YES NO

I am happy to take part in this project. YES NO

Can I use photographs and screen shots from your profile? Please read the following carefully:

I agree to my photographs and screen shots from my profile being used during the above research project. YES NO

I give permission for these images of me to be used in publications/presentations. YES NO

I give permission for the images of me to be used on the internet. YES NO

Your name	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

Researcher name	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

2.2 participant information sheet

Information Sheet for Research Participants University of Sheffield



Project: THE FUTURE IS SOCIAL: WHY WASTE YOUR TIME ON FACEBOOK?
Date: X
Participant: X

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Below, I have outlined how you would be involved. I appreciate you taking the time to read this information. If you have any further questions please contact Eve Stirling on 07920850682 or email: eve.stirling@sheffield.ac.uk

What?

This project aims to explore the influence of social networking sites and related technologies on the undergraduate university experience. I am interested in finding out about your experience of Facebook and your perceptions of how you use the site. I would like to know and discuss whether social networking sites support students in their university experience.

This project has been ethically approved via the Education department's ethics review procedure. The University's Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University's Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

Why?

You have been chosen for to take part in this research as you responded to my initial questionnaire on Facebook usage and said you would be interested in taking part in further research. Facebook is such a huge part of the current undergraduate experience and I am interested in why that is.

What?

This is a year-long study but the majority of the interaction will take place on Facebook. You will be asked to add me as a friend on Facebook and to join a Facebook research group. The aim of this is to look at your Facebook page for basic patterns of use and use the group to discuss how you feel about Facebook. You will be asked to fill in similar questionnaires to the one you have already completed. You may be required to take part in either a series of face-to-face interviews to talk about your Facebook usage, or an interview either by Facebook, email, msn or using Skype. The research will take place between October 2010 and July 2011. You need to have access to a computer and the internet to take part.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

This research project is an ESRC funded PhD and data and findings of this project will be used in my PhD, which is due for completion in October 2012 and subsequently may be published and presented at conferences.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications unless you want to be.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

I will use screenshots from your profile and audio and/or video recordings from focus group meetings only for analysis and for illustration in conference presentations and lectures with your permission. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. Original recordings will be stored on a hard drive only accessible to me and can be destroyed at any time at your request. I will destroy all data after successful completion of my PhD, which is due for completion in October 2012.

Can I withdraw from the research?

If you are unhappy with any part of the research please let me know, you can withdraw at anytime by leaving the Facebook group, deleting me as friend or emailing me.

Should you feel your complaint has not been handled effectively you can contact the project supervisor. **Project Supervisor:** Dr. Julia Davies j.a.davies@sheffield.ac.uk or Dr. Jason Sparks: j.sparks@sheffield.ac.uk.

2.3 Approval letter



Eve Stirling

Head of School
Professor Jackie Marsh

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27 May 2009

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Dear Eve

Re: Why Waste your Time on Facebook?

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project. The reviewers have now considered this and have agreed that your application be approved

Yours sincerely

Mrs Jacquie Gillott
Programme Secretary